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Persons and Places in Auden

By Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F.

NOTHING in Auden is merely what it is—and no one is simply *who* he is; rather, both settings and characters point beyond themselves. To illustrate with one of this poet's best lyrics, "Musée des Beaux Arts," no reader would suppose that the poem was "about" a visit to the museum that houses Brueghel's masterpiece "The Fall of Icarus." The painting, interesting as it is in itself, is used to show the indifference of men to pain unless it directly concerns them, and to point out at the same time the ordinary context in which heroic events occur. Icarus is all of us, when tragedy strikes, and as an image he is characteristic of Auden's imagery.

Auden regards historical events as unique and voluntary, related by the principle of analogy, in contrast to natural events, which are recurrent, necessary, and related by the principle of identity. And human response to a situation has finality because of its uniqueness; one summer, however, is like another summer, one dawn like another dawn, and neither summer nor dawn has any choice about its arrival. Wagner and Yeats, Auden says, were the last great artists to look at human history as cyclic, in the manner of the pagans, although this over-all view did not prevent the latter from considering individual experiences as analogous.

The poet's subject matter, according to Auden, is "a crowd of historic occasions of feeling in the past." It is up to him to select that event which will serve as the best term for the analogy he wishes to construct. Although of course writers like Dante in the epic and the author of *Everyman* in the drama had selected experiences of certain individuals for their analogous value, it remained for William Butler Yeats in such poems as "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory" to bring the method into use in a lyric. Lionel Johnson, John Synge, George Pollexfen, Robert Gregory himself take on typical as well as private significance under the artistry of Yeats. In a *Kenyon* article on Yeats, Auden, after calling the poem on Gregory something new and important in English poetry, goes on to say: "It never loses the personal note of a man speaking about his personal friends in a particular setting—in *Adonais*, for instance, both Shelley and Keats disappear as people—and at the same time the occasion and the characters acquire a symbolic public significance." In the same essay he declares that it is the duty of the present to resurrect the past. Why? Because historical experiences, though unique, can be universally significant—they are, as he describes them in his foreword to Merwin's *A Mask for Janus*: "analogous experiences [which] have always occurred and will continue

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to occur to all men."

Although places as well as persons lend themselves to analogy, Auden prefers the latter, being quite in sympathy with the little rhyme he quotes in *Letters from Iceland*:

Biography
Is better than Geography,
Geography's about maps,
Biography's about chaps.

Or again, as he writes to Lord Byron in the same volume:

To me Art's subject is the human clay,
And landscape but the background to a torso;
All Cezanne's landscapes I would give away
For one small Goya or a Daumier.

Whatever of nature appears in his work is always a backdrop against which the human comedy is acted out, or an arrangement of geographical synonyms for symptoms of an ailing society; nature for its own sake he seems to value as little as the Augustans did.

The metaphor that Auden chooses to express his regard for the figures of history as symbols is that of the isomorph, a term borrowed from chemistry. In "New Year Letter" he says:

We need to love all since we are
Each a unique particular
That is no giant, god, or dwarf,
But an odd human isomorph. . .

Isomorphous compounds are those which crystallize in the same geometric configurations; isomorphs, though of different elements, are linked by their similarity of molecular structure. It is the business of the contemporary critic, Auden feels, to show the individual that though he is unique, he has much in common with others. In Auden's own words, "Each life is, to use a chemical metaphor, an isomorph of a general human life." To illustrate, though Rosetta in *The Age of Anxiety* is primarily a lonely Jewish girl, she is also Nostalgia, and in the end, an isomorph of civilization itself. Anthony and Cleopatra, Auden tells Howard Griffin in "Conversations on Cornelia Street," are figures of history turned into archetypes. Even the accidental ironies of their situation are meaningful. Their story, Auden says, shows us that the world in a certain light can be truly glorious—not only for these two people, but for us also.

These isomorphs fall into patterns. G. S. Fraser in *The Modern Writer and the World* has summarized these rather well: "Auden wrote about leaders—lonely heroes, explorers, airmen, mountaineers, small isolated groups of scouts crossing an enemy frontier, bands of conspirators with secret passwords." Many of these types belong to his earlier work, which has all the trappings of roman-

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tic adventure stories, espionage tales *à la* Graham Greene. They might be grouped under the title "the exceptional man." However keen Auden's desire, as evidenced by his music-hall rhythms, to appeal to the people, he himself is a superior individual, and so are the characters who become his isomorphs of society.

Each person must apply the isomorph in the direction dictated by his own life. About the autonomous completed states that constitute art, "New Year Letter" says:

Though their particulars are those
That each particular artist knows,
Unique events that once took place
Within a unique time and space,
In the new field they occupy,
The unique serves to typify,
Becomes, though still particular,
An algebraic formula,
An abstract model of events
Derived from dead experiments,
And each life must itself decide
To what and how it be applied.

Paolo and Francesca are, above all, themselves as they appear in the *Inferno*, Canto V, but their plight as shown by Dante is the symbolic equation of all similar surprises of passion; unique, they typify. (The reader of Auden is not surprised to learn that he names Dante as one of the three greatest influences on his own verse.) Not all of these isomorphs are historical; some, in the fashion of Hogarth, are heightened from materials out of life: Miss Gee, the spinster who dies of cancer; James Honeyman; poor Victor, who kills his unfaithful wife.

The uniqueness of the isomorph, a uniqueness symbolized by Ahab's scar, prevents communication if over-stressed, as the Romantic movement tended to over-stress it. The poet's job is to make the personal excitement which led to his utterance "socially available," for the attainment of which aim he will have to draw on what he and his reader have in common. Concentration on myth in this century is an attempt to break through the isolation caused by this uniqueness. Concentration on the individual experience in its character of isomorph, as in Frost's lyrics, is approaching the problem from the other direction. A third approach is that of the mask, both as Yeats conceived of it (the revelation of active virtue as this occurs when a man such as Saint Francis or Cesare Borgia disciplines himself by donning a disguise, or antiself) and as Pound utilized the device in his many dramatic monologues where the ego concretizes facets of itself through impersonations, or *personae*.

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One last phase of "persons in Auden" might be his use of personifications. Revivifying this neo-classical device, he elevates certain abstractions to the status of human beings. Time is an officious intruder who coughs when the lovers would kiss; Fear, on a flawless evening, forgets to look at his watch; Goodness "has a name like Billy and is almost perfect/ But wears a stammer like a decoration"; History is an organizer, an operator—in "Spain" we find the passage: "History to the defeated/ May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon." Envy is a "brilliant pamphleteer," "Expert impersonator and linguist, proud of his power/ To hoodwink sentries." Wrath "has learnt every trick of guerilla warfare." In the elegy on Henry James, "Amour Propre is his usual amusing self"; in the one on Freud the unhappy Present recites the Past like a poetry lesson, and:

Only hate was happy, hoping to augment
His practice now, and his shabby clientele
Who think they can be cured by killing
And covering the gardens with ashes.

In "Lucky, This Point in Time and Space," Death, no longer a vague generality, is pictured as putting down his book—as G. S. Fraser says, like a shy student sitting lonely in a corner; he makes friends with the living as they gather about in a circle in the calm evening light. All these abstractions personified are like extras on a motion picture lot, entering the poems to perform their bit—their significant gesture, their recitation of a telling phrase.

SETTINGS as well as characters can be both unique and typical; about their double nature Auden comments in a *Harper's* essay: "Many of us have sacred landscapes which probably have much in common, but there will almost certainly be details which are peculiar to each." Actually, the term isomorph would be just as applicable here as to symbolic persons. Because of their universal aspects these sacred places can bridge the distance between the poet's vision and the reader's heart.

If W. C. Williams is known for his sense of place, so too should Auden be. But where Williams creates an American god in Paterson, a being with metamorphic powers, Auden is content to let his psychic atlas supply the images for his poetic conversations. The five places which rise above the rest among his geographical symbols are Spain, Brussels, New York, England, and Iceland, with the last two predominating.

Spain since 1937 stands out to Auden as a "symbol of us all." Its "tableland scored by rivers" is stalked by the threatening shapes of our fever, he says in his fine poem "Spain 1937," calling up that metaphor of modern man as victim of a neurosis which is never far from his verse. Francis Scarfe in his book *Auden and After* refers to the battlefields of Spain as a sort of screen on

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which "our own psychological disturbances are horribly projected." At the start of its civil war Spain is faced by two choices: (a) to die a romantic death, or (b) to help build the Just City. Either way lies suffering, a suffering bound to implicate all.

Like Rilke, Auden often sees the spiritual diseases of his day in terms of landscape—or as in this case, of cityscape. In "Brussels in Winter" he pictures the city as a heartless prostitute, ready to entertain anyone who has the money. In "New Year Letter," written just a year later, he describes it as a haunted house where a doctor (History itself as it was then being made) comes to visit the rooms where "The sleepless guests of Europe lay/Wishing the centuries away." If Brussels is a haunted house, New York is a haunted wood, wherein are lost the sophisticated children of the present ("September 1939"), who "have never been happy or good." Again, in a poem called "The Capital," New York is pictured as a siren or a wicked uncle, betraying its victims to a forgetfulness of their mortality, hiding away its disgraces of drudgery and loneliness.

But Auden's New York has several faces. The year after Auden had settled in the United States, Richard Eberhart wrote of him as follows, in a commemorative catalog put out by New York City's Gotham Book Mart for its silver anniversary: "Auden's coming to America may prove to be as significant as Eliot's leaving it. Eliot sought a truly old world. Auden wishes to become a citizen of what he must consider the theater of new attitudes, a place for growth . . . Luck has guided him to the right place at the right time." Here in the largest city of this new land Auden can most easily be alone; among the crowds that swarm over Manhattan he can keep in touch with the life he writes about while at the same time detaching himself from it at will for purposes of contemplation. Such contemplation he records in "September 1939," wherein he begs that in the darkness of metropolitan New York he may shine out, like a spark among the reeds of skyscrapers, to communicate his iota of faith to the other points of light who like him emit their little messages through the gloom.

The leading symbol in Auden's psychic geography, however, is England. All foreigners, he tells Lord Byron in his witty letter to that poet, regard Englishmen as afflicted with the Oedipus complex, and to some extent this opinion is justified. To his friend Elizabeth Mayer in "New Year Letter" Auden writes: "England tells me what we mean"; and again, "England to me is my own tongue,/ And what I did when I was young." When he and Elizabeth converse in New York, England furnishes the images aroused by their talk. Thus when shoddy thinking is in question, Burton on the Trent River flashes into his mind, "Squalid berry Burton" (the town is well-known for its great brewing houses); Rhondda in Wales is recalled by any split between reason and emotion if wilfully made for the sake of unworthy gains. "Graceless

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Bournemouth," whose sandy heaths and pine woods have been converted into a busy seaside resort, stands for public or private sloth. No matter what vice or virtue he thinks of, "An English area comes to mind."

Somewhat limiting this concept, Auden declares in "New Year Letter" that he takes as "symbol of us all" the limestone moors between Brough on the River Eden in Westmorland and Hexham in Northumberland, close to the old Roman station of Cilurnum. The easily chiseled rock of this region can well stand for the malleable human condition. Specifically the poet means that the Pennine area presents in miniature the history of man, how from the "cliff of savage fells" (the primitive era) he has evolved to the "green and civil life" symbolized by valleys. In the process of this evolution the smouldering forces of his imagination have thrown up the "enormous cones of myth and art" to which the rock-formations at Dufton and Knock correspond. Going backward in memory to the land drained by the rivers of his boyhood—the Wear, Tyne, and Tees—Auden sees as melancholy reminders of lost beliefs the abandoned mines that fascinated him so in his early youth. These cast-aside industries of England's Pennine district are to him symbols of a worn-out capitalism. Donald Stauffer in describing this aspect of Auden's verse says: "Abandoned mine-shafts, frightening pit-entrances, undrained bogs that were once cultivated, peat-slopes, rusting machinery, are set in panoramas as melancholy as any to be found in 'Wuthering Heights' or in Tennyson's Lincolnshire scenes." The terrain is strewn with debris suggestive of a new Ice Age, as Auden grimly imagines our century to be, feeling that nothing so well symbolizes infertility as a glacier or its after-effects.

Yet this limestone area, like the symbol of England itself, is Janus-faced. The most extensive melioration of it is found in "In Praise of Limestone," contained in the collection entitled *Nones*. Again, Auden employs synecdoche as he traces the history of the Englishman in relation to Gea, his earth-mother. ("Not in Baedeker," also in this volume, records in a more ironic key this progress of the human race in England.) In the lyric on limestone Auden uses metamorphoses to dramatize stages of culture: *weathered outcrop* to *hill-top temple*; *appearing waters* to *conspicuous fountains*; a *wild* to a *formal vineyard*. Spared volcano or desert or jungle, the Englishman has a comfortable picture of the Deity, strengthened by his experience with "a stone that responds." The promised security is to some extent a delusion; the granite wastes, clay and gravels, oceanic whisper that decoy away the worst and the best from England have a point to their warnings, for as Auden tells the addressee of the poem: "They were right, my dear, all those voices were right/ And still are; this land is not the sweet home that it looks. . ." Yet the potency of limestone to be transformed renders it the best of all earthly analogues for Paradise. Auden concludes his poem thus:

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... when I try to imagine a faultless love
Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone landscape.

What higher praise of limestone could there be?

The mountains of northern England, as mountains always do in Auden's poetry, offer an emblem of action, difficult action. Among the dramas *The Ascent of F6* well brings out this theme as the hero Ransom struggles up the mountain by that name. Just as mountains represent action, plains represent its absence; they have a nightmare quality which Auden describes quite vividly in the sixth bucolic of *The Shield of Achilles*:

Which goes to show I've reason to be frightened
Not of plains, of course, but of me. I should like
—Who wouldn't?—to shoot beautifully and be obeyed
(I should also like to own a cave with two exits);
I wish I weren't so silly. Though I can't pretend
To think these flats poetic, it's as well at times
To be reminded that nothing is lovely,
Not even in poetry, which is not the case.

As the title-poem continues, Thetis discovers on her son's shield not vines and olive trees, ships and marble cities, but "a plain without a feature, bare and brown"—emblem terrible in its way as the Medusa.

Considering Auden's interest in landscapes, one might almost say that he has invented a new type of topographical poem. The eighteenth century, which popularized that *genre*, was content with meticulously describing the "prospect," with all its contrasts of contour, light, and color, and with an employment of the view as a "composition of place" for a meditation or series of reflections. Such are the familiar "Windsor Forest" by Pope and "Grongar Hill" by Cooper. Auden, on the other hand, frames in the window of his poem a scene which delineates through geographic symbols the moral predicament of the individual and/or of society in his time.

As stated above, London, Dover, and Oxford are singled out from the other cities of England for special development as symbols. Every poetry-reader is acquainted with the musical "As I walked out one evening,/ Walking down Bristol Street." Here, London itself is revealed as a landscape, with fields of harvest wheat, a glacier hidden in a cupboard, and a desert sighing in a bed. However, as James Southworth has noted, usually when a landscape occurs in Auden the English countryside has served as his model, whereas for his city scenes he goes to New York, as in *The Age of Anxiety*. "Dover" is a rather bleak poem showing travelers sailing away from "the town where nothing is made," bound for the Mecca of France, or coldness of heart; other travelers

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return, as if to safety. Oxford, in the poem of that name, is pictured as a garden, an oasis, wherein people try to evade reality. In "Oxford" Auden comes very close to what will next be examined—the island of symbol.

IN 1937 Auden with MacNeice made a trip to Iceland, a part of the world congenial to him both because of his Nordic ancestry and his fondness for Anglo-Saxon images and versification, as well as by reason of his preference for such austere landscapes as are characteristic of that region. "Journey to Iceland" pictures the traveler approaching "his limited hope"—limited, since like sexual love an island offers only an isolated escape. The "glitter of glaciers" has something false about it, as has "the abnormal day of this world." Here the European can try to shake himself free from the griefs of that continent, from specters that haunt the dreams of all with consciences. But he will never succeed, "For the world is, and the present, and the lie." He has been tempted by the word "Reject," but in the end he has either to go home to England, or to answer the cry of Spain. Iceland is no true solution. As Auden writes back to his wife: "The Nazis have a theory that Iceland is the cradle of the Germanic culture. Well, if they want a community like that of the sagas they are welcome to it. I love the sagas, but what a rotten society they describe, a society with only the gangster virtues."

A transmutation of the island as escape is Atlantis. The ironic poem of that name offers counterfeits of Atlantis, presented as temptations to philosophy and sensual pleasure, and at the end leaves the traveler putting out to sea, still intent upon his pursuit of the unattainable. Another transmutation is the isle of *The Tempest* in *The Sea and the Mirror*, a commentary on Shakespeare's play—like Iceland, the island of Prospero is no careproof retreat. There is never a way to avoid the necessity to act.

In "Paysage Moralisé" Auden warns his contemporaries away from the futility of seeking out islands for purposes of escape. This somewhat obscure sestina, with its end rhymes *valleys, mountains, water, islands, cities*, paints a picture of a starving civilization founded by those who once, reining in their horses on barren mountains, decided to settle on the green fields below, fields that promised them water. Their sorrow, which has merged with that of Auden's age (like guilt in "Spain," here sorrow is universal), has congealed to a glacier—if only it could melt, how green would flush the mountains, how tall would rise the rebuilt cities! The deceptive lure of islands would then be broken:

It is our sorrow. Shall it melt? Ah, water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands.

Ironically, Manhattan, which Auden has selected as his present home, is an island, as is Ischia in Italy, where he now spends his vacations. The poet rea-

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lizes that the latter is no flawless Belle Isle, no imperishable Eden, despite its charms. In his lyric "Ischia" he celebrates this island gratefully, among other reasons for its truthfulness: "Not that you lie about pain or pretend that a time/ Of darkness and outcry will not come back. . ." Ischia is an expensive refuge, but Auden is willing to pay the price. Unlike the limestone land of his birth, its splendors are like marble mileposts "in an alluvial land."

Although England itself is an island, Auden in his poetry does not concern himself with it as such. Rather, as in *Richard II*, it is a little world, a microcosmic jewel set in the silver sea, though Auden's vision is far from being as optimistic as that permitted to John of Gaunt. The sea symbolizes in one sense that disorder out of which civilization has arisen; in another, potentiality. Related to it, as Auden points out in *The Enchaféd Flood*, is the shell, image of poetic truth, which when combined with the stone, sign of geometric truth, will yield the means to erect the Just City. Above England and its neighboring sea vaults the sky, source of all that is spiritual. Within the depths of the waters that wash its shores lurk the irrational that psychoanalysis tries to expose.

Auden, in short, is not so blatant in his patriotism as Kipling, but when he needs a symbol for civilization he can think of none more appropriate than England. He draws richly upon his own life there. As he tells Lord Byron:

The part can stand as symbol for the whole:
So ruminating in these last few weeks,
I see the map of all my youth unroll,
The mental mountains and the psychic creeks,
The towns of which the master never speaks,
The various parishes and what they voted for,
The colonies, their size, and what they're noted for.

The question of attitude as it can be detected in this use of England symbolically is an interesting one. The poet, though he admires his native land, cannot wholeheartedly approve her. "What do you think about England, this country of ours where nobody is well?" he asks in *The Orators*. The disrespectful way in which he speaks of England to Lord Byron, and the distinctly qualified compliments in other poems reveal this ambivalent attitude.

Now that Auden has picked another homeland, he can regard his ancestral country with a detachment impossible when he was still a British citizen. In the first issue of the *Kenyon Review*, published in 1939, Delmore Schwartz discloses his serious worries about Auden's involvement with the destinies of England: "Will Auden suffer Kipling's fate, which is that of many another poet who was too intimate with the *Zeitgeist*, just as Kipling's Muse cohabited with the White Man's Burden? One does not know what is in store for present-day England, which is undoubtedly Auden's evil genius. With England, Auden now exists in the shadow of the Munich Pact of September, 1938. This is not

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true, at least in the same sense, of such poets as Yeats, Valéry, and Wallace Stevens. Such is the price of being completely contemporary." Auden is not so easy a subject for prophecy as someone like Cummings, who writes much the same now as he did in the twenties. Mr. Schwartz's fears, as expressed above, seem not to have materialized. What has transpired is a clearer perception on the part of critics that England is for Auden a supreme synecdoche, but only one of several by which he can delineate his industrialized world, with its evidences of decay. The view across the ocean permits a necessary aesthetic distance.

England, "the mote between all Europe and the exile-crowded sea," as Auden says in "Perhaps," is not so important as she thinks she is—the planes that soar high, high over Dover prove that. She is not innocent of the blood in Spain, or China, or anywhere else in the world where blood is shed. Auden, who loves her, must take her as she is, even as Chaucer took his Church, but he cannot always keep an accent of agony from his references to her. Probably just for that reason—the fact that she is neither wholly good nor wholly evil—she serves well to typify civilization, since until the arrival of the Authentic City, civilization too will not be free from guilt.

BEFORE leaving these *paysages moralisés* in Auden, we ought to mention his stress on inner landscape, for indeed there is a private atlas of the individual as well as a public one of his world. His poem "Air Port" well illustrates, in its third and fourth stanzas respectively, these outer and inner landscapes. This concept of a person considered geographically furnishes Auden with some of his best images, as in the Yeats elegy. The inner landscape of man consists of will and need; its state is created by free acts, and it is ruled over by self as king. Across it stretch the forests of childhood and the farms of adult life. The relationship between these two landscapes is crystallized in this couplet from "New Year Letter": "Each lives in one, all in the other,/ Here all are kings, there each a brother." This employment of symbol in an anagogical sense relates Auden once again to other Christian typologists. (So too does his interchange of ship and city as symbols, a practice of the Fathers of the Church.) The attitude reflected in this last quoted statement is somewhat of a refutation of John Bayley's assertion in *The Romantic Survival*: "None the less, Auden is surely wrong in maintaining that because of the gratuitous nature of poetry it has nothing to teach us about life and can only do harm if it tries." It has plenty to teach us about life, Auden would say, but only if we interpret its lesson as analogy.

Each of Auden's persons and places, then, borrowed by him as all poets borrow such things, to make the abstract concrete, acts as a kind of synecdoche

(Continued on Page 148)

Loyalty and Tradition in Conrad

By Robert O. Bowen

BENEATH all of Joseph Conrad's fiction there runs an authoritarian foundation which is obvious if one considers his training as a ship's officer and his love for the traditions of English culture. Conrad's work was a study of loyalty to traditional authority, an examination into various aspects of faith in what he called "ways of life." These ways were institutions insofar as they expressed the relatively fixed beliefs of many, were not controllable by any one person, and were handed down from countless predecessors who had evolved and proved their validity. The best known of these was the Mercantile Service. Occasionally Conrad resorted to folk or tribal custom as in *Amy Foster* or "The Lagoon." Otherwise he utilized revolution as a way of life, and at least once, in "Il Conde," he used social grace. In his world, virtue lies in resignation to a traditional code, and violation of the code causes ruin and death. Though a thoroughgoing libertarian could read the negation of the individual into Conrad, the novels and stories imply a free but disciplined person rather than a beaten one.

Basically Conrad's world is akin to Augustine's; his characters are damned or saved accordingly as they apply their wills in meaningful works, in action. Conrad's people always choose; they are never coerced by circumstance, no matter how hard the scene and violent the men; even Donkin of the *Narcissus* is of his own volition "the scum of the earth." As a Victorian novelist, Conrad is remarkable for his insistence on free will and responsibility at a time when Moore, Gissing, Bennett, and many other contemporaries were so strongly turned toward the determinism of the French naturalists.

Choice in Conrad always culminates in a problem of institutional loyalty, more often than not in a problem of divided loyalties. Frequently the division lies between a character's private ego and the larger self of a tradition. In this Conrad turned to the medieval notion of organizing life according to the values of a traditional institution. Stylistically his medieval tendency is demonstrated in the relatively high incidence of abstract words in his writing as contrasted with the low incidence of such terms and the consequently greater concentration of concrete detail in Hemingway.

The basic difference here is that Conrad, like the moral philosophers of the middle ages, assumed certain values to be true. Courage, for instance, is so valuable in his world that it creates sympathy for even such monsters as Kurtz, but Conrad does not attempt to explain why courage should be valuable. In Hemingway, on the other hand, a major element is the justification of courage

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according to an empiric rationale. Courage to Hemingway is the means of overcoming the chaos of a world whose institutions are destroyed, and he argues the efficacy of courage with profound intellectual discernment.

Conrad is not modern enough to show any particular respect for intellect. His thinking characters are like Lord Jim, who dies still unable to perceive the true aspect of his motivations, or like Donkin, whose intellect is a contemptible animal cunning; or intellect is simply ineffectual as in *The Shadow Line* in which the young officer's efforts neither help nor hinder.

The denigration of intellect in Conrad has its fullest statement in *Typhoon*, which presents a man who is very nearly a moron—a creature totally incapable of laughter, small talk, or the slightest whimsey—yet saves his ship after the epic of fashion, demonstrates heroic stature, and in conclusion hands down justice with the wisdom of Solomon, all because he is loyal to the traditional discipline of the Mercantile Service. Captain MacWhirr is without doubt one of the dullest men ever presented as a protagonist in serious literature. Nevertheless, the institutional soundness of his authority is such that he overcomes the combined malice of both nature and his alien passengers. If MacWhirr had been either as intelligent or as imaginative as his mate, he would have lost the ship; and if by some miracle he avoided that eventuality, he would never have dealt equitably with the coolies at the end of the voyage. MacWhirr's is an uncomplicated but deep-running character; he gives his total loyalty to a traditional, proven way, and that in turn supports him. Neither beauty, grace, wit, learning, nor other heroic qualities, as ordinarily conceived, are needed in such a world: simple loyalty to tradition suffices.

Typhoon contains a substantiating dramatic element which recurs frequently in Conrad. The mate is intelligent, imaginative, and loyal. His intellect and imagination would several times have jeopardized the ship except that his loyalty curbs actions the captain has not approved. A major dramatic concern of this tale is the maturation of the young mate in regard to the patience required by authoritarian systems. In *The Shadow Line* the same theme is developed with greater concentration. Here intellect and imagination are ineffectual rather than negative since they are applied within the legitimate framework of authority. The young captain is frustrated in every original effort he makes to save his ship and crew. Yet the voyage succeeds, because the captain did not violate the tradition and because one very sick man in his command remained loyal "for some distinct ideal," that is, for the tradition of seamanship. The voyage impressed a young officer with a truth which underlies all of Conrad's fiction: The individual cannot comprehend the total nature of his problems, and his understanding cannot relieve him of his problems, but faith will support him in spite of these lacks.

The Heart of Darkness dramatizes the Conradian theme of individual

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versus traditional more fully than any other single work. There is first Kurtz, a supremely intelligent and idealistic person. Cut off by the jungle from the traditional values of his European culture, Kurtz has lost the fulcrum by which he can control life and so tumbles the world in upon himself. In his attempts to establish a personal authority he perpetrates only a mounting evil, and in the end he is able to see the horror of his chaotic activity only because he has to some slight extent submitted himself again to established authority.

Like Kurtz the Company's agents operate without the effective control of the European office; but where he defected through a defiant strength expressed in pride, they stray through weaknesses and do not go beyond the usual run of human vices—greed, slovenliness, cruelty, and such. The Company's authority is abused sufficiently to deny it productive significance as a trading venture, but it is adequate to sustain those who submit to it. That it is a traditional system at all justifies it in the dark land. The same idea is dramatized in "An Outpost of Progress" through the two Europeans who go under because they fail to sustain the simple system of their post while the native grows wealthy because he recognizes the system, crude as it is, as the only means of giving order to existence.

Against the macabre backdrop of *The Heart of Darkness* Marlow is safe. Though he thinks, his actions are based directly on his commission from Europe.

Much more physically vulnerable than Marlow but nevertheless quite safe is the whimsical Dutchman who rambles into Kurtz's territory. This presence in the tale acts as a gloss to suggest that Kurtz is ruined through losing his loyalty to an external ideal and basing his faith within himself. The Dutchman is a friar of sorts, come afoot into the very heart of The Dark Continent, without escort or weapon, without commission or head, and motivated by only the most unspecific curiosity. It would seem that Kurtz, even in the advanced state of his madness, respects this person because he sees in him a thing beyond his own power to affect. Where the natives recognize Kurtz's divinity, the Dutchman recognizes only his greatness and his confusion. In keeping with Conrad's usual dramatized contempt for intellect, we find that what keeps the Dutchman from losing his focus and destroying himself as Kurtz has is his childlike faith in a seaman's manual: a book that sets out the ritual, the outward and visible signs of a faith, a tradition. To Conrad, belief in a seaman's manual by a man who had no direct knowledge of the sea is infinitely better than an attempt to live by the highest ideals when these are measured according to the self.

The Nigger of the Narcissus presents the conflict of personal and traditional loyalty in different terms. James Wait recognizes that according to his ego-centric values the standards of the *Narcissus* do not signify and that his philosophically valid lack of public pride demands malingering. The physical world,

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however, is still about him in the forecandle to be dealt with, and his egocentricity requires the realignment of as much of it as possible toward himself. Here Conrad describes a limitation of simple faith: those who have faith in ideals can be misled by vicious or perverted entities. Wait is perverted and misdirects the crew by abusing their idealism, except Singleton whose loyalty to seagoing tradition is too firm to be affected, and Donkin whose commitment to materialism leaves him uninfluenced by any idealism. Ultimately the misled men—"children" in Conrad's actual words—are saved because James Wait's perverse egocentricity is unviable. Only Donkin, who is corrupt beforehand, directly violates the discipline of the ship. Donkin is saved from the relatively rapid decay of Wait because he does have faith in something outside himself, specifically in Wait's gold. But his faith is low and will lower him. In this Conrad does not reflect the general attitude of his time. Gissing, for instance, says outright that there is no moral evil which money would not alleviate.

IN *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, as in *The Heart of Darkness* and other narratives, an important part of the dramatic statement is that one's fate is worked out through the specific act of commitment to a tradition and through a seeming inability to withdraw commitment. Conrad apparently recognizes free will in only an initial selection. James Wait chose to reject the seagoing tradition, and he will not alter his decision though his life depends on a second choice. There is no point at which the structure of the tale implies that Wait has a determined or damned nature, but he does not relax his decision. Kurtz suffers the same inability to recant. Like Wait he is intellectually aware of the end he has selected, but he will not, perhaps cannot, choose twice. The over-all implication of this matter of free will but single choice is that once a will is implemented materially, it becomes fixed. The material manifestation of a particular principle is a sign of the fate to which that principle will inevitably lead. Thus the act itself is of mystical significance, and if the principle expressed is evil, the subject is committed to destruction and death.

Materialism in Conrad is objectionable not simply in concrete forms but in the abstract form of intellect as well. The conceptions by which Conrad tallied virtue—dignity, loyalty, patience, unselfconsciousness—are revealed as basic premises; they are not induced. Thus it is to be expected that intellect is not necessarily presented as an admirable quality in Conrad's work. The meaning of intellect is worked out in two contrasting Conrad novels. The hero of *Lord Jim*, an idealistic intellectual, presents the inverse face of that drama acted out by MacWhirr in *Typhoon*. Where MacWhirr's loyalty commits him to act according to tradition rather than thought, Jim is unable to act with full commitment because he cannot conclude his thought at any given point. He cannot, as it were, become loyal. The first unperceived bit of cowardice in Jim's *Conway*

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days was a hesitation caused by his consciousness of the situation, by his inability to submerge his entity even temporarily in that of the tradition. When the incident leading to his public disgrace comes, he again fails to act properly, not because he does not understand what is called for but because he thinks so much on the situation that he acts without resolution. It is this awareness, this inability to become a part of the ritualistic motion of life that the old lepidopterist refers to when he speaks of submitting one's self to the element and letting it buoy him up.

Taken in the light of the concept of intellectual awareness and of its failure as a human resource, Jim's death is tragic on quite a different level than it first appears. Customarily it is assumed that at the last Jim voluntarily pays his debt to a lofty code of conduct in answer to "the call of his exalted egoism." Although this explanation is Jim's, it is far from agreement with the dramatic construction of the novel. The significance of the final act is its ironic portrayal of the failure of a man to perceive, even in the face of death, which code it is that governs him—what the universal law is.

In Jim's past, for each violation of the code he was trained to, he was punished. On the *Conway* the punishment was disappointment since the dereliction was slight. The greater violation on the pilgrim ship was followed by disgrace. The incidents leading to his death involved such a grievous breach of faith toward many traditions that nothing less than death would suffice. In this, a moral law similar to that in *King Lear* seems to control; an inevitable justice that one carries within him and finds around him. The final harsh irony of Jim's situation is that it is his mind which corrupts him and robs his death of intellectual dignity since his perverted sense of honor stems from that.

CONRAD does not suggest in his over-all writings that intellect is evil *per se*; he says only that it is never necessary to virtue and is always a tool of evil. In *Victory*, Heyst is extremely intellectual—barring Kurt and Marlow, the most intellectual of Conrad's characters. Until the action of *Victory* begins, Heyst has avoided evil because he has withheld commitment. Then he commits himself unawares to a relation based on principle, charity specifically, and so becomes an institution, The Tropical Belt Coal Company. Heyst's sole policy until this time is passivity. Other than this he avers to seek "only facts," feeling that a knowledge of empiric fact will lead to order. What he does not perceive is that a principle of order is required to relieve the fact of chaos, and this principle cannot be an empiric fact; it must be spiritual or intuitive, at any rate non-intellectual. This knowledge comes to Heyst too late for utilization.

Once he becomes committed to The Tropical Belt Coal Company, his troubles with the bestial hotel keeper begin. The hotel keeper in his conservative role senses the basic nihilism of Heyst's non-participation. He realizes

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accurately, though quite illogically, that "Heyst is not what he appears." Actually Heyst is a false thing. He is the coal company which he appears to be merely an agent of.

Heyst's first great active error was the slight loan that led to his becoming The Tropical Belt Coal Company. His second was applying, without validating social commitments, social judgments in the case of the girl. The second error committed him to a sequence of eventualities which he could neither cope with or reject. This underlying significance of the narrative is distinctly dramatized. Heyst cannot choose but remain with the girl on the island since the steamer that ferried him out will not return for some time.

Into his island world and his spiritual insulation comes an institution of evil, of intellect: Ricardo and Company. Though renegade and corrupt, this group is definitely traditional. Ricardo follows his leader because the leader is a "gentleman" whose business it is to order others; their "servant" is tradition-bound by direct conquest. All die together since all are supported by the common motion of their evil union and without it cannot exist.

The Chinese, Wang, noting the effective evil of Ricardo and Company in opposition to the vulnerable and disoriented Heyst and Lena, absconds with Heyst's only weapon. That is, he withdraws his influence as a traditional element, a servant. Wang is the only Conradianly legitimate dweller on the company property. In taking a wife from the native tribe, he committed himself to the tribe and held a strong position within it. As the action of the tale climaxes, he is the only regular dweller on the island who remains armed and is significantly enough the only one who is certain of his position—of his effectiveness. His loyalty to the tribal institution keeps him in safety from the first. If anything, Ricardo and Company fear him because they realize that his institution, the tribe, is more powerful than theirs, a renegade gang. The place of Wang in the tale would be dramatically improper if it were not intended as a reflection on Ricardo and Company as well as on Heyst.

Concerning the security of a definite status, Lena was safe with the troupe, unhappy but not in grave physical danger. Her real fear was that she be forced to commit herself totally to the troupe and so lose her ability to leave it if a chance ever offered. She withheld choice from lack of opportunity, whereas Heyst withheld from lack of will. With Heyst, as the action demonstrates, she has no safety at all.

Although Heyst is never openly depicted as such, he is a coward in the same way that Jim was: in a real emergency he could not act because he could not perceive his part in an action. His self-consciousness focused his attention on himself as an entity apart. Lena is lost with him from the beginning, for to her he is neither partner nor protector. Her destruction results because the first institution (Heyst) which she accepts proves to be illusive.

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IN Conrad's world all who deprive themselves of the rich nutrient of traditional order are offered death as an answer. It is not so much the quality of a curse that seems to destroy such people but rather a wasting as of starvation. James Wait is not tubercular though he appears to be; Kurtz suffers from a wasting fever but dies of sheer horror; the strange outcast of "Amy Foster" wastes away and finally dies of a kind of violent neglect. The unspecific notion of the illness of each of these people, taken in light of its dramatic situation, is one of spiritual starvation rather than biological assault. The hero of "Amy Foster" is of special interest in that he almost succeeds in transferring his loyalty from one deeply held commitment to another. He is tentatively accepted by the English peasantry and is slowly beginning to absorb a sense of place. Then his child presents him with a need to assert his early traditions. At this point Amy Foster, literal moron that she is, senses that he is alienating the child, and she turns against him. Since she is his only real link with the folk, her betrayal cuts off his nutrition, and he wastes away. She does not actually kill him; she merely lets him die; and her fortunately low mentality preserves her from any misconstrued pity. She is in the wide Conradian sense right in defending her child from the malicious ambivalence of an alien loyalty, and any guilt she might have felt as a result would have been false.

Tradition supports its own even where authority is technically or legally directed adversely. Amy Foster ignores her marriage vow for the more significant folk tradition; the young captain of "The Secret Sharer" successfully conceals a fugitive who has followed the code but broken the statute. Apparently Conrad felt that many traditions were valid so long as each involved delegated authority of some kind and was above the control of any single man. In *The Secret Agent* two men work with considerable success within an official government agency, whereas in "The Secret Sharer" success is secured quite illegally, although within a traditional code. The matter seems to turn on the point of how deep one's loyalty and how culturally valid its object, and these are matters of revelation rather than logical argument.

Conrad was above all a believer in choice and responsibility. He wrote from intuitively assumed values and looked on intellect as a cunning maze leading toward all of the meaningless materialistic rationalization that he despised and feared. In an age when modern science was reaching maturity, Conrad wrote with a vision of the world most suited to the millions who throughout medieval Europe and Britain committed themselves to monasteries to live in the light of a tradition that illuminated their drab days with an almost Byzantine glow. Even Marlow, the great intellectual narrator of Conrad's tales, is medieval in his wisdom; he is always the first one who measures action against principle, tradition, a statement of faith, rather than against empiric logic.

Menéndez y Pelayo: Voice in the Wilderness

By Monseigneur Pierre Jobit

WHO would doubt that Menéndez y Pelayo was a rigid Catholic and an ardent and spirited defender of his faith? Herein is his prime and principal concern; herein is his honor too. In his firm style, which abounds in theological expressions and becomes almost sacerdotal at times, the author of the *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* developed theses that are essentially apologetic. In a discourse delivered in 1881 before the Sevillian Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, he sings the praises of Saint Isidore of Seville and observes that "the seeds of Isidorian authorship—so vital, so magnificent, so splendid—bear fruit more and more in Spain while the thickening darkness gathers over the rest of Europe." He points to Saint Isidore's exhortation for scholars "to bind sacred and profane science in a close and fecund embrace, to shun calling scientific what is only shadow and deception; also not to fear, as a result of boyish timidity, any scientific truth or any study that constitutes a valid object of research." This is a worthy program formulated by a man in whom the historian was never diminished by the believer. And, as a believer, he set his standards high. In an address on the occasion of his admission to the Spanish Academy, he proclaimed that "if it is necessary to sing clearly and in Castillian . . . it is in order to give testimony of our faith before men so that God may be praised in the universal silence."

But this Christian was also a man, a man with weaknesses and limitations. We must give credit to Lain Entralgo for having had, after Cardenal Iracheta, the honesty and the courage to admit this fact in his study of Menéndez y Pelayo. For he breaks away from the distasteful yet persisting tradition which refuses to consider, in its unreasonable efforts to be edifying, every aspect of the biographies it treats. As for the master who has given us so many great books, let us remain respectfully on this side of the threshold of his heart and let us not probe the secret "nostalgias which arose from his soul when the monologue inspired by his work as a historian managed finally to weary his powerful spirit."

Besides, to be simultaneously a complete believer and an historian was asking much of a man at a time when, we must confess, a certain ecclesiastical pusillanimity often put shackles on research. In the nineteenth century, the Church was often on the defensive, as it weathered one attack after another: it feared the popular movements that a bourgeois clergy did not understand too

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well; it looked with suspicion on philosophy, history, and criticism; it distrusted anything new, especially ideas concerned with an adaptation to modern life. The dominant tendency was to take refuge in a past which appeared, by way of a simple optical illusion, to be less troubled, and therefore better. It is in this way that the thought of the Middle Ages won fervent supporters, trying to find in it, without going any further, the definitive oracles of Christianity. Ponget — the French Lazarist whose life and "Logia" have been examined by Jacques Chevalier and Jean Guitton—the master and friend of the beloved Maurice Lagendre, had a habit of saying, not without irony, to these sanctimonious admirers of the Middle Ages, "Ah! Tell me about these centuries of faith!" Believer that he was, Menéndez y Pelayo could, as one year rolled into another, rid himself of the mirages and prejudices evoked by these partisans of the past. It is once more Lain Entralgo who observes, in order to emphasize this evolution, that "he became more and more a historian as time passed; it should not be cause for astonishment that, remaining both a Catholic and a Spaniard, some of his judgments changed in the light of determined and historical realities."

Menéndez y Pelayo will be praised then for having maintained a resistance to this traditionalism which, superfideistic and hostile to reason, tempted so many Catholics into a shrivelled City of God. The confidence that he keeps in human reason—a confidence which is one of the principles of authentic Thomism—is always a sign of intellectual virility. And he celebrates this virility in a worthy fashion when he speaks of the "mystique" in the above mentioned address—a "mystique" where the soul is now Mary and now Martha, "as Saint Theresa, who never separated the active life from the contemplative life." And, he adds, "Here is indeed Spanish mysticism, neither unhealthy, nor egoistic, nor inert, but virile, energetic, and robust." Elsewhere, passing in review the spiritual writers in whom Spain is so rich, he asks that they be studied not in these books of devotion that are so filled with fawning and sweetish unction, but in solid and documented monographs fixing their true character. Defining mysticism, he writes that it is "a special psychological state, an effervescence of the will and of thought, a profound contemplation of things divine, and a prime or metaphysical philosophy leading to the same end as dogmatic theology although by different paths. The mystic, if he is orthodox, accepts this theology, takes it as a postulate and the basis of all his speculation, but he goes further." It is apparent that the believer detracts neither from the philosopher nor from the scholar in this analysis. The fact of the mystic is as far removed from sanctimonious explanation as it is from shortsighted rationalism.

WE know that Menéndez y Pelayo sided with the Inquisition: as a member of his "species," he is the old Christian who is expressing himself and the

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Spaniard who never came to the point of forgiving Masson de Morvilliers and the Encyclopedists for having treated these questions with ill temper or, at the least, without nuances of understanding. "Why then," he asks in his *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, "does one mistreat, even among Catholics, the Spanish Inquisition?" We have heard him rage against heresy while trying to be just where people were concerned. "My history," he writes at the beginning of this same book, "will be partial in its principles, but it will remain impartial in the matter of facts. I will make every effort so that my love of a holy cause will not make me unjust towards its worst adversaries and will preserve my respect for everything noble and worthy of respect."

This is a generous thought, a thought that allows him to say with Saint Paul, "Oportet haereses esse." It is necessary that there be heresies. For if there is a joy "in laying low the pride of learned masters and in seeing great oaks felled," there is also a benefit to be derived from heresies; to fight the inevitable sclerosis of doctrines and liturgies, to keep believers from becoming what, according to Péguy, is worse than sin itself—"habituated souls."

And here is the reason why this great believer, while acknowledging the Middle Ages to be charged with Christian values, will not hesitate to proclaim his admiration for the Spanish Renaissance and the freshness, liberty and spontaneity accompanying it. Cervantes affords him the opportunity of saying, "This human and aristocratic attitude of the mind, the privilege of all great men of the Renaissance, but to which some men added grave moral aberrations, finds its perfect expression in Miguel de Cervantes."

He will go even further, paying homage to a great movement of thought which the Congregation of the Holy Office will hardly spare. Having demonstrated that Cervantes is not a free thinker, as certain partisans say, he adds that these partisans "would find his true filiation when his criticism appears bolder, his mind more armed with barbs, his humor more jovial and more independent, in the polemic literature of the Renaissance, in the latent but always living influence of this Erasmian group, free, biting, and bitter, which was so powerful in Spain, and which brought the greatest geniuses to the Court of the Emperor."

This intransigent Catholic will go even further in his intellectual probity. He will be able to understand why this philosophical system or that critical framework was necessary at this or that moment. "Gone," says Lain Entralgo, "is the age of the petulant and expedient judgments of youth. Don Marcelius could see that the scholar could not permit himself the soft warmth of being a puppy in modern culture." He thought that every intellectual who did not resign himself to being outside of his times, and therefore totally inefficient, had to pass through the experience of Kant and Hegel. At this time (1890), it could be a sign of merit for a Spanish Catholic to think so freely.

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Besides, if Menéndez y Pelayo has often been severe in his opinions about French thinkers (sometimes justly, at other times somewhat partially), there does exist a remark by him, a curious and very pertinent remark, about Victor Cousin and his school. He considers the founder of French eclecticism to be a very slight philosopher, but he praises him for being the "caudillo" of a phalanx of "authentic researchers" (whom he contrasts to the Krausists, seekers, in his eyes, "de embrollo y pura apariencia.") Now Bergson himself, in a very beautiful page devoted to Revaissón, admires in Cousin the love that he bore, in his fashion, for philosophy and the regiment of apprentices that he had recruited. Quite close here to Menéndez y Pelayo, Bergson adds, "Cousin always lacked one thing as a philosopher: he never met his own thought head on." Here is a happy meeting of two great thinkers, each so different from the other.

To tell the truth, Menéndez y Pelayo had partial praise for Victor Cousin in order that he might better overwhelm poor old Julian Sanz del Río. In a delicious diatribe, Marcelino beheads this good Castilian from Arévalo, who had left at Sacramonte de Granada "a sort of reputation for piety and mysticism, heightened by means of a bit of bizarreness" and who, retired to Illescas after his sojourn in Germany, was considered mad by reason of his many extravagancies. If Spain knew only one of all Germanic systems of philosophy, Krausism, it was on account of the intellectual poverty of this missionary, who nonetheless pronounced judgement from on high upon the philosophers of the Sorbonne. As for his capacity as a writer, Menéndez y Pelayo rebukes him for his idiom, describing it as "Moorish quarter or Algerian pirate talk," this heavy, invertebrate tongue that makes Sanz del Río almost as unreadable as Karl Christian Frederick Krause himself, "this obscure thinker, who is as forgotten in his own country as he is, unfortunately, honored in ours."

It is evident, moreover, that the Catholic historian had to react in the face of the philosophy of the Heidelberg master. Without doubt, it was unjust to accuse the Krausists of pantheism, and when Sanz del Río answered with unrestricted protestations of faith, one could have wished for more moderation in Menéndez y Pelayo's severe judgement of his position: "It was then obvious that he did not have the soul of a philosopher and of a martyr." This school, whose intentions were narrow, nevertheless awoke and whipped into action those who were still asleep in the Catholic camp—nor was it without connection with a fortunate reform in education. Its doctrine was not a pantheism, but rather an "immanentism" wherein may be anticipated a sort of modernism, as it was spoken of later by Pius X. And in this way the Krausists pitched their tent among the heterodox, and came within the scope of Menéndez y Pelayo. But perhaps it would have been necessary to look more closely, to try to separate the dross from the gold (the value of Krausism was especially in its human

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extension). But another concern explains, in this matter, the combative ardor of the critic: this great Spaniard was reacting from the very start against what appeared to him to be a peril to properly Hispanic values. And herein is encountered another essential point.

Vincente Marrero, in a recent and excellent book about Ramiro de Maeztu, distinguishes two tendencies that divide Spaniards: the critical instinct and the traditional instinct. It is the Maeztu of *Nuevo Mundo* who condemned in 1913 what he called the "old sin of the race," a certain "petulancia" which is simultaneously braggadocio and the exaggeration of what is true; and it is Menéndez y Pelayo who then seemed to him to be one of the most obvious representatives of this disposition. "This old sin had become more exacerbated during the years of the Restoration and the Regency. Menéndez y Pelayo had assured us that everything had flowered in Spain—science, philosophy, art—and that it would be enough to go back to the sources to make everything bloom anew." The young critic was less sure of this then. But later the "critic" was to agree with the "traditionalist" on many points, and both must have since found grounds for agreement today, however little the perspectives of history may still enchant them. In fact, Menéndez y Pelayo—and it is to his honor—loved his native land with a passion. He felt—better than and before many others—the extent to which Spain was the guardian of permanent and international values—the values of the culture of thought and art which Europe and the world need beyond question. Let us recall the memorable pages that he was inspired to write near the end of his life for the Balmes centenary (1910). In them he denounced "the suicide of a people who, a thousand times deceived by chattering sophists . . . throws itself into the pursuit of the vain mirages of a sham culture; who far from cultivating its own genius, the only genius which can redeem and ennoble races and nations, proceeds to the noisy liquidation of its own past. Where the heritage of the past is not conserved piously, let us not hope for an original flowering or for a commanding idea. A new people can improvise everything except intellectual culture."

But, if there exists a Spanish culture, a "Spanish science" (the title of one of the first books that Menéndez y Pelayo wrote, a work of which he did not fully approve later on), it is the Catholic dogma which remains for him "the very axis of this culture and this philosophy." In this way is explained, in its perspective, the reaction against those who tried to drink almost entirely from other wellsprings, those "illustrados" who were disciples of the French *Encyclopédie* (who are a bit too calumniated too, and whose case should be reconsidered in the light of Jean Sarrailh's recent book), the "Krausists," slavish imitators of Germany, and so many others. If the French philosophers have been doled out generous portions in these disparagements, let us recognize that Menéndez y Pelayo was able to accord justice to Maine de Biran, Ravaisson,

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Fouillée, Cournot—a proof of his discernment and taste as well as to the great French Hispanists. Whence, inversely, is seen his devotion for certain names glorious in Spanish thought, such as, going back through the centuries, Bolmes, Donso Cortès, and all this "philosophy with a harmonic tendency" which, by way of the writer whom he names as "the great metaphysician of the Sixteenth Century, Sebastian Fox Marcillo," meets up again with the doctor from Seville who formed young Spain: Saint Isidor, archbishop and educator of peoples and kings. And in the middle of this "golden chain," as he so gracefully phrases it, is Cervantes and his immortal book. Don Quixote is for Menéndez y Pelayo the uncorrupted master of a moral education, and Sancho "is not the incomplete and vulgar expression of practical wisdom. Nor is he merely the humoristic choir accompanying the human tragi-comedy. He is a spirit redeemed, pulled from the mud by Don Quixote. He is the first and the greatest triumph of the ingenious hidalgo; he is the moral statue that his hands fashion: Don Quixote educates himself and educates Don Sancho, and the entire book is pedagogy in action, the most surprising and the most original of pedagogies. It is the conquest of the ideal by a fool and a rustic, folly teaching and correcting the prudence of the world, common sense ennobled by its contact with the ideal." One should be able to cite in its entirety this admirable page from the 1905 discourse (on the literary background of Miguel de Cervantes and the evolution-elaboration of Don Quixote) where Menéndez y Pelayo celebrates the genius of the "raza" and, in Sancho, an entire people formed to grandeur by the tradition of this genius.

One can see then that Menéndez y Pelayo sang earliest of this Hispanism—a Hispanism whose multiple aspects and titles to nobility will be defined by an Azorin, a Maeztu, an Antonio Machado, with Unamuno placing on the horizon "the Spanish man"—that the world will see and hear again. This "Hispanism," which flows in "Hispanity," which swells and rolls to Spanish America: Menéndez y Pelayo anticipated it, had a foretaste of it and prepared its awakenings—as is demonstrated in the recent volume by his *Epistolario (Menéndez Y Pelayo y la Hispanidad)*, who has collected his correspondence with writers of the New World.

MENÉNDEZ y Pelayo was not crying in the wilderness when he made his appeal to salvage a great tradition from which the world has drunk so deeply, and which is necessary to the world. There is a whole galaxy of scholars, critics, historians, poets, and philosophers who, from whatever political or ideological horizon they have come, have by his example listened to the voice of the great ages, have communicated with their thought, and have inventoried the artistic and historic patrimony of Spain.

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Quite recently, the Third Congress for Intellectual Cooperation, organized by the Instituto de Cultura Hispanica de Madrid for the Fourth Centenary of Charles V, furnished the manifestation of a truly universal Hispanism in which the United States holds a capital position. It seems, however, legitimate to claim, for French Hispanism, a large part in this work that Menéndez y Pelayo judged to be of such importance. After people like Morel-Fatio, the Foulché Delboscs, the Mérimées (and here is a dynasty although one thinks in the first place of Ernest Mérimée, founder of the French Institute in Spain); after Pierre Paris, who restored the Casa Velasquez in the heart of la Moncloa, after that excellent historian, a friend of Spain, Maurice Legendre, we are now organizing solid groups of Hispanists, old and young, who will be followed by new crops of workers ready to take up the torch. The time has long since passed when romantic and pleasant Hispanifying is enough. We have discovered and we are working to make loved a profound Spain—yes, *La plus profonde Espagne* is the very title of a book we are to publish shortly with the Editions du Tambourinaire.

It is for these reasons and in this spirit that we have wished to present to readers of *Renascence* this noble and Christian figure, Menéndez y Pelayo, thinking with the great historian Guiger of the glories of Spain, that this country deserves to have drawn to itself "the love and the blessings of the human race."

Translated by Spire Pitou

Thomas Merton and Poetic Vitality

By Richard Kelly

IT is interesting that the twentieth century has produced few Catholic poets of any note, despite the fact that there are thousands of Catholics writing poetry. In America today two Catholic poets have made themselves felt—Thomas Merton and Robert Lowell—both of whom earned their fame after the last war. And even a superficial reading of either of these poets will give one a hint as to why they stand apart from the anonymous bulk. They have brought their religious backgrounds into the city (Boston—New York), into the foxholes, into Harlem, into the life they *know* and *see*; in contrast to the weaker poets who are trying to resurrect the thirteenth century with sentimental incantations to Pegasus, unaware that a Catholic could write about his own age without becoming a heretic.

Merton's poetry is characterized by its dissonance and cacophony, and its brilliant juxtapositions. His hard lines strike a new note in poetry: "Brass traffic shakes the walls. The windows shiver with business." Merton's great theme is the theme of the San Francisco group of today—the cry against the loud machine, money, sin, and cities. In fact, Merton's poetry has many points of contact with a writer like Lawrence Ferlinghetti who, in *A Coney Island of the Mind*, writes:

..... The Promised Land
where every coin is marked
In God We Trust
but the dollar bills do not have it
being gods unto themselves.

Merton has:

This was a city
That dressed herself in paper money.
She lived four hundred years
With nickels running in her veins.

And one of the pervading themes of Merton is his apocalyptic vision. He writes:

Fly, fly to the mountains!
The temple door is full of angels.
Fly, fly to the hills!
The men on the red horses wait with guns
Along the blue world's burning brim.

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Outside of the fact that this echoes Matthew Arnold's "Fly, our feverish contact fly!" from his "Scholar Gypsy," it is a theme which is also powerful among the so-called Beat Generation. Ferlinghetti has the lines:

The end has just begun.
I want to announce it.
Run don't walk
to the nearest exit.
The real earthquake is coming.
I can feel the building shake.

Merton has undoubtedly been a great influence on the Beat Generation, giving them the gospel against Henoah and the apocalyptic ring of the prophets in the wilderness of steel. But who had the greatest influence on Merton himself—where did he develop his powerful style? The most immediate influence on him, most clearly evident in his early poems, was Garcia Lorca, whom Merton was reading when he was twenty-five. Lorca's *Poet in New York* arose from his superficial vision of a decadent city (Lorca never learned English and his tirades against New York were based on his impressions only, some of which he worked into excellent surrealist poems). Lorca's influence is seen most clearly in Merton's *Figures For An Apocalypse*, published in 1947, seven years after the appearance of *Poet In New York* in America. Lorca was deeply concerned over the position of the Negro and Jew in New York, and he saw them as symbols of a suffering captivity and hope for the world. He wrote:

The black men, befuddled, went wailing,
between gold suns and umbrellas,
the mulattoes pulled rubber, impatient to gain a white torso,
and wind blurred the mirrors
and ruptured the veins of the dancers.

("The King of Harlem")

Merton finds this same symbol in the Negro and finds him caught in the whirlwind of an apocalypse:

Oh how quiet it is after the black night
When flames out of the clouds burned down your cariated teeth,
And when those lightnings,
Lancing the black boils of Harlem and the Bronx,
Spilled the remaining prisoners,
(The tens and twenties of the living)
Into the trees of Jersey,
To the green farms, to find their liberty.

Both poets use long sprawling lines, often losing music for the expedience of getting something terrible off their minds.

But besides Merton's and Lorca's affinity to the dark race, it is from Lorca

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that Merton learned the value of the unusual word combination which has a shocking effect on the reader. Merton writes: "But oh! the flowering cancer of that love/ That eats your earth with roots of steel!" This compares with Lorca's: "The day that cancer bludgeoned you down/ and spat on you, in the beds where the guests of contagion/ lay dying. . ."

Merton's similes and metaphors are often as surrealistic as Lorca's—the poetry of both is full of lions, nightingales, and moons: "Blessed is the army that will one day crush you, city,/ Like a golden spider." It is this surrealism which Merton uses to give a brilliant power to his poetry, and he uses it with more control than Lorca, and consequently with more effect.

In *The Tears of the Blind Lions* Merton can be seen at his best, where influences of the other poets are more unconscious in his writing. Most of the poems here have the speaking-out quality of Auden, the tone being conversational, serious, and highly ironic. Dylan Thomas and Eliot are no longer paraphrased, and Merton, with his own voice, produces a poetry which is both simple and powerful, especially where he is not trying to pull a city down. A few remarks on his poem "Song" may show why Merton's style is so powerful. Here Merton is on his own ground, no longer writing of the cities which he has abandoned for the life of a monk, but writing of his "own island." However, he retains the hard lines of his anti-machine poetry and puts them to a new use, framing a song to God:

But I drink rain, drink wind
Distinguishing poems
Boiling up out of the cold forest:
Lift to the wind my eyes full of water,
My face and mind, to take their free refreshment.

This excellent description of the poet in a Kentucky valley discovering poetry in the freedom of the land and mind rings true. The surrealism of his apocalyptic poetry has been intensified by a greater discipline here: "poems/ Boiling up out of the cold forest" does not seem fantastic and adolescent as do some of his other conceptions, especially in the context of the poem. In the first stanza he introduced "silence is louder than a cyclone/ In the rude door, my shelter." And since the poem is about a man's relationship to his "home" and to his God, such sudden flights into hyperbole are proper and do not sound unbelievable, especially since the comparisons are new and striking, a technique which can actually put off the question of credibility (as Eliot demands of Shelley), by virtue of its sheer power. This is something which a good deal of Dylan Thomas' poetry relies upon.

Thus I live on my own island, on my own land
And speak to God, my God, under the doorway

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When rain, (sings light) rain has devoured my house
And winds wade through my trees.

Here there is a slight tapering off of effective images, but the straightforward and sincere tone manages to carry the poem out nicely. "My house" and "my trees" are now under the monastery door behind which the poet finishes his song while the rain falls on his natural home with wind in his trees.

In poems such as "Song" and "Reader" Merton becomes more personal and more positive; he comes off more real for it. In *Figures For An Apocalypse* and in several of his poems in *Strange Islands* he is too busy screaming like a prophet against the coffee in our veins and our cities pale as actresses to give the reader any sense of balance. To listen to a long list of crime, sins, and degradations, even if written beautifully, simply becomes dull and makes the reader wonder if perhaps he is not at the retreat with Stephen Dedalus. And it is in the poems of this nature where Merton's form is weakest also: lines sprawl out with little sense of music or compact thought; and to claim that this induces a sense of the disorder of the lives he is writing about would seem like an unjustified rationalization. Eliot's "Waste Land" has a most precise form to it; for how can chaos be pointed up in a poem unless the poem first presents a form from which to deviate occasionally?

TO see the contrasts in Merton as a poet, it would be advantageous to examine two passages: the former from "Exploits of a Machine Age"; the latter from "For My Brother."

Exhausted by this nothing, they
Came home, faced the steadfast apartment,
Gloves, windows, and even moon.
And they made up their minds.

For in the wreckage of your April Christ lies slain,
And Christ weeps in the ruins of my spring:
The money of whose tears shall fall
Into your weak and friendless hand,
And buy you back to your own land:
The silence of whose tears shall fall
Like bells upon your alien tomb.
Hear them and come: they call you home.

Here is Merton at his worst and best. The description of the exploited people in the cities is flat, bad prose. The reader never feels that Merton knows these people, or if he does, that he mustn't feel too strongly about them, that he is better at hating the abstract machine than he is in sympathizing with the real people. But in his poem to John Paul, his brother, who was lost in action

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Poetry and Communication Once Again

By John Julian Ryan

IN HIS RECENT article on "Poetry and Communication," (*Renascence*, XI, 125-34) William Rooney has striven to ensure that poetry will not be suborned to ends that are counter to its essential nature. This intent is, of course, altogether admirable. But in trying to fulfill it, Rooney has dealt with the issue in a way that seems confusing and misleading. Both the methods he follows and the examples he cites are, indeed, too questionable to let pass without some comment—especially as his subject is one that is of vital importance to us all.

The principal method that Rooney follows is that of setting up as typical and exhaustive the positions of Plato and Aristotle on the nature and use of poetry. Yet, for several reasons, this method seems very temerarious.

One of the reasons why an either/or opposition of these two men may be imprudent is that in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle used the phrase "we Platonists" at least a half-dozen times. Evidently he did not feel, in the writing of this central work, that he was so much against as with his mentor. I believe that we have a right to assume that he was not concerned so much with developing a new philosophy in reaction against an old, as with developing philosophy itself. He naturally took it for granted that his readers, as Athenians, would be familiar with the Platonic dialogues, and that his own works, in going beyond these, were only correcting them where necessary.

Again, in presenting the two philosophers as his archetypal theorists, Rooney maintains that Plato had a full and consistent body of doctrine on poetry. Yet, in fact, when we have read the *Ion* and a few passages in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, we have read almost all that he has had to say on the subject. And, on his own testimony, he can hardly be taken as a model of relentless consistency. Indeed, he entered, according to Taylor, a strong disclaimer to any such quality; in a letter to a friend, he strongly deplored the attribution to him of "Platonism," indicating that he thought of himself as a dramatist of philosophy, rather than as a systematic philosopher. And while it is true that he did bar poets from his republic, consistency would have required him to reintroduce them: who, otherwise, were to compose the myths that the philosopher-kings were to use in controlling their subjects? Or who were to compose the epithalamia with which the communal marriages were to be celebrated? As a man who had himself written poetry (but even if he had not) Plato must have

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suspected that philosophers would not be too good at it. Finally, there is his own practice as a writer. Not only did he (and he alone of all the great philosophers) write exclusively in a fictional form; he regularly relied on myths and metaphors to convey his most important doctrines, as in the myth of the cave, the myth of Atlantis, and the description of the mob as the great beast.

But even if we grant that Plato did work out a consistent theory of poetry, and that this is the basic one, inevitably, to be adopted by all who do not follow Aristotle, we cannot help being a little startled by the assertion that Aristotle's *Poetics* constitutes an adequate treatment of poetry as a whole. This work contains little of consequence about the epic and almost nothing about the lyric. Nor, for that matter, does it provide us with a comprehensive treatment of Greek tragedy itself. It seems to have been designed by Aristotle to tell his fellow patricians how, in writing a necessarily religious play, they must ever be on guard against dullness and preaching. Certainly, had a great Persian writer, let us say, turned to this work for guidance, he would hardly have suspected that Greek tragedies were part of a religious festival; that their central theme almost always had to do with *hybris*; that Aeschylus was a priest; that Sophocles was a priest; that Euripides had been accused of betraying the Eleusinian Mysteries. Nor would he learn much about (or the philosophic reasons for) the use of masks, statuesque poses and conventionalized gestures, background music, dancing, formal conventionally oriented settings, the barring of violence from the stage. And what would he learn about dialogue, the use of different Greek dialects, the nature of Greek prosody?

Now, if all these things are hardly so much as mentioned in the *Poetics*, it would seem that Aristotle assumed they were already well enough known, and that, as a teacher, he might well stress the kinds of things that might all too easily be overlooked or neglected. For that reason, he emphasizes what a beginner, writing a religious play in a public contest, must never forget: that whatever else his play might be, it had to be entertaining. Aristotle deals therefore with tragic catharsis, characterization, credibility, plot-outcomes, poetic justice, spectacle, thought—all primarily under this aspect. And since Sophocles with *the* dramatist for illustrating these matters, Aristotle deals, as Kitto points out, very superficially with Aeschylus and Euripides.

If it is a mistake to treat the *Poetics* as a thorough basic study, it is a further mistake to treat one section of this work as if it alone were important—as if, because Aristotle says that the perfection of a play lies in the *syntaxis* of its events, we need prize this quality only, ignoring the qualities of credibility, poetic justice, and tragic purgation, among others. Then we merely compound this mistake if we go on to maintain that because the excellence of a

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play lies in the *syntaxis* of its events, the excellence of a lyric lies simply in the coalescence of its elements.

THE REASON for Rooney's adoption of the Aristotelian theory—or, rather, of a theory of some Neo-Aristotelians—is, as we have seen, that he wishes to preserve poetry from being regarded as anything but what it is. He would have us realize that a poem is not a tract; it is not a lesson in ethics; it is not even a prayer. To appreciate it as a poem, we should ignore what purely non-literary minds go to it for, its extrinsic reference.

Unfortunately, we are concerned here, not with two kinds of meaning only, but with three. One is the meaning to be found in the statements that constitute the poem: the purely intrinsic meaning. Another is the meaning which is also given to the poem by the *fictional* situation from which these statements emerge: the meaning that seems extrinsic only to the literal-minded. And the third is the implication which the whole meaning of the poem (the unified blend of these two previous meanings) may have for an ethicist, a sociologist, or some other individual. To say that a poem is not to be thought of as primarily designed to convey this third kind of meaning is not, therefore, to say that intrinsically it may not be, and does not gain by being, the expression of a profound spiritual truth. And to say that it must not be thought of as having extrinsic utilitarian values is not to say that a poem (like a joke) may not derive much of its meaning from its situational implications. A framing situation may be to a poem (though in inverse proportion) what a cartoon is to its caption.

It is because he is fearful that the appreciation of the intrinsic pattern of a poem is jeopardized if the poem is treated as a one-speech scenario that Rooney then has recourse to a very strange set of probative examples: a sonnet by Shakespeare, a poem by Longfellow, and an English translation of the Preface of the Mass for the Dead.

Shakespeare's sonnet, he says, is a beautiful thing in and of itself. This is valid, but to contend, as he seems to do, that it gains nothing as a moment or an event in a sonnet-sequence story, is to make us wonder why Shakespeare wrote it as that.

The answer, unless I am mistaken, lies in the fact that Shakespeare's sonnet-sequence is a *mythos*, the theme of which is Neo-Platonic love. In the sonnets previous to the one which Rooney quotes, the speaker has been exhorting the person whom he loves to insure for himself an earthly immortality through having children. Immortality consists in living on in the minds and hearts of others—either through children or brain-children. In the sonnet quoted, however, the speaker is saying that he is willing to forego living on in the mind of the person he loves best if doing so will bring with it a trace of pain.

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To say, therefore, that this particular sonnet does not gain immeasurably in force (is not given a *fortiori* strength) by its placement and by the "build-up" it thus receives seems to be merely absurd. It amounts to saying that Shakespeare's sonnets are to be enjoyed like so many fragments of stained-glass, which lack the general design (of a *mythos*) that endows them with the beauty of coalescence. Somehow, it is hard to believe that a great dramatist thought so disjunctively as that.

Rooney then goes on to try to prove that it does not matter who is at the sending end of a poem, nor who is at the receiving end, either. Whether someone is addressing you (or another person) or you are addressing someone else—this is of no consequence, except that it is rather an annoyance to be addressed directly—the poem loses its poetic quality as a result. To prove this latter point, Rooney then adduces the poem by Longfellow that begins, "Lives of great men oft remind us," etc.

Unfortunately, however, this is a very sorry example, which proves nothing. First of all, it is technically so poor that it has no right to be compared with any good poem—least of all with one of the world's greatest sonnets. Secondly, it is not, as Rooney makes out, addressed directly to the reader. It is an address by a young man to the Psalmist. Thirdly, as such an address, it could hardly be sillier and more obnoxious, for what *could* be more foolish than the giving of advice to a man, long since dead, on how to live? Or what could be more obnoxious than for that advice to be given by a bumptious young optimist, weaned on Samuel Smies, to a person who had plumbed the depths of human joy as well as misery, and whose songs are divinely inspired?

Certainly it is not sufficient evidence for proving that we always find advice or exhortation offensive in poetry. If that were so, how could we account for the popularity of the *Rubaiyat*, or of such poems as, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," or Hopkins' "Glory be to God for dappled things," with its hortatory last line, "Praise Him!"

Finally, one does not prove that there is never any gain for a reader resulting from his identifying of himself with the speaker of a poem—in other words, that in poetry empathy is valueless—by citing a passage of prose—and of translation prose, at that.

THE POINT HERE IS simply that a poem may be a description, a comment, a meditation, a full narrative, or a situation-piece, and for its due effect it may require that we identify ourselves with the speaker—or that we do not do so. Some poems benefit by such identification, and others do not. It is not in any way required by such a poem as Tennyson's description of the eagle, the sonnets of de Heredia, or a great many pieces of magazine verse today. On the other hand, a description may gain in effect if we let ourselves exclaim

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it with the speaker, as in Hopkins' "The Windhover." Similarly, a poetic exposition or meditation may imply little engagement with the speaker, as in such lines as:

With interspheral counterdance
Consenting contraries advance,
And plan is hid for plan:
In roaring harmonies would burst
The thunder's throat; the heavens, uncurst,
Restlessly steady ran.

This is also true in much modern verse, which is the last refuge of the descriptive and the familiar essay, or again, a comment or expository or meditative poem may require that we accord with the tone of its speaker, as in the "Ode on the Intimations," the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and "The Deserted Village."

Finally, if the poem is a situation-piece, we may feel *with* the speaker (as in "Saul"), and this feeling may even be that of praying with him (as with some of the metaphysics and with Hopkins again in his paraphrase of the psalm *Justus tu es, Domine*. Or our feeling may be, though sympathetic, rather a reaction *against*, in the sense of not fearing *with*, for instance, but *for* a character, or pitying him, as in Browning's "My Last Duchess" or Betjeman's "Sun and Fun, the Song of a Night-club Proprietress."

This last is perhaps a crucial instance here, for unless this poem is appreciated within the context of its situation, it seems hardly more than a jingle. Once it is viewed contextually, however, we see that it rightly resembles music-hall verse; if it did not, it would not emerge as moving poetry, nor would it live up, as it does astonishingly well, to the Aristotelian requirements of credibility, justice, tragic catharsis—of everything except *megethos echouses*. Here it is:

I walked into the night-club in the morning,
There was kummel on the handle of the door,
The ashtrays were unemptied,
The cleaning unattempted,
And a squashed tomato sandwich on the floor.

I pulled aside the thick magenta curtains
—So Regency, so Regency, my dear—
And a host of little spiders
Ran a race across the ciders
To a box of baby 'pollies by the beer.

Oh sun upon the summer-going by-pass
Where everything is speeding to the sea,
And wonder beyond wonder

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That here where lorries thunder
The sun should ever percolate to me.

When Boris used to call in his Sedan
When Teddy took me down to his estate,
When my nose excited passion,
When my clothes were in the fashion,
When my beaux were never cross when I was late.

There was sun enough for lazing upon beaches,
There was fun enough for far into the night.
But I'm dying now and done for,
What on earth was all the fun for?
For I'm old and ill and terrified and tight.

Whatever may be our final judgment of Betjeman, one thing seems certain: relatively few poems can be fully appreciated as disembodied voices. A poem is not a pure form; it has a matter, as well as a structure. It has beauty of implication, as well as of statement, and these two blend coalescently.

Persons and Places in Auden

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to bring wider realms of thought home to the other reflective citizens who share his planet, with all its problems. His images fit one inside the other, like Japanese boxes: the individual with his private landscape at the center; next, the limestone regions of his boyhood; then England and/or Spain, a larger "symbol of us all"; and enclosing the rest, the symbol of the Just City. W. H. Auden counts upon the fact that no man is an island to build his design of analogies, and he continues to hope—few poets have better reason—that through his craft he will bring closer the coming of the Kingdom.

Thomas Merton and Poetic Vitality

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during the war, there is a powerful feeling which is communicated with a personal warmth and universal interest, and the form follows quite naturally from the subject.

Merton has had an influence already on modern poets, but it is very possible that he offers much more still: he has opened (along with Robert Lowell and perhaps Robert Fitzgerald) a new line for Catholic poets in particular. He has broken the unfortunate tradition of sentimental poems about hazy eternities, baby lambs, and infinite nothings; and he has brought the symbolism of the liturgy and Catholic tradition into the poetry of his own age which is still looking for some stable orthodoxy.

Review-Article:

From Harlem to Gethsemani

The Secular Journal of Thomas Merton. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$3.75.
Prometheus, A Meditation. By Thomas Merton. Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani.

Nativity Kerygma. By Thomas Merton. Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani.

Monastic Peace. By Thomas Merton. Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani. \$1.00.

THROUGH the years subsequent to the publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain* the paradox that was Thomas Merton has somewhat resolved itself. For not only has he persevered in the monastery—many feared he would not—but he has advanced to one of the most responsible posts in his abbey, namely that of master of choir novices, which involves the crucial initial formation of the young monks, and, moreover, has rapidly enhanced his quite distinguished reputation as a writer by at least one volume a year. His writings have ranked him among the superior spiritual writers of our day. As a convert, intellectual, seasoned spiritual writer, and Trappist monk, Merton presents a fascinating study in personality, not the least intriguing aspect of which is the how and wherefore of the development of his heart and mind, a phenomenon that could not have happened overnight. The recent publication of his *Secular Journal* greatly illuminates this point, as we are admitted to the intimacy of the personal diary he kept in the two or three years immediately preceding his entrance into the monastery, and given to share the secrets of the intellectual and spiritual searchings that went into the maturing of his mind and spirit.

The present *Journal*—selections from his diaries covering the years 1939 to 1941—has an odyssey all its own. When in December of the latter year Merton left for Kentucky he gave the manuscript to Catherine de Hueck Doherty, founder of Friendship House, Harlem, with the understanding that it was hers to publish if and when she pleased, with all royalties to be used for her work of Catholic Action, which he had much admired, and in which, before his final decision to become a monk, he had half-decided permanently to participate. To the present volume Merton has contributed a rather lengthy preface in which he tells of the book's genesis—that it was written “by a young layman, recently converted to the Catholic faith, and still struggling to find out whether or not he was supposed to dedicate his life to writing or to some higher and more special vocation.” And he adds, one surmises with tongue in cheek, that “it in no way claims to represent the outlook of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance to which I belong.” Whatever editing the manuscript underwent in the process of preparation for its publication was accomplished, says Merton, “without destroying or notably altering the artless spontaneity of the original.” Its “somewhat naive essence” was retained, while correcting its more “intolerable defects.” If some readers still find the book intolerable, he asks them to consider “the careless style, the callow opinions and all the other defects,” as those of a writer “much younger and even more unwise than I am at present.” The severely dogmatic statements of his views, he cautions, have since become more temperate due to a more intimate contact with the spiritual problems of other people, and he asks to be forgiven such “youthful sarcasms” as remain, and hopes that the indulgent reader may be inclined to find them funny and apropos.

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From the first entry—Greenwich Village, October 1, 1939, to its last, written at St. Bonaventure University, November 27, 1941, one notes an accurate and luminous comprehension of the "one thing necessary," to love God, which implicitly includes doing His will, and loving one's neighbor as oneself—in a word, the great distinguishing Christian virtue of charity, and with it all the attending virtues, outstanding among which is that of a deep compassion for all of human kind. It was this quality that had attracted him to the Baroness de Hueck, whose "neighbor," as he remarks in his preface, "is not only her neighbor but is also Christ." He points out to each reader that "it is no good to pass by on the other side of the road with our eyes devoutly cast down, with our lips murmuring pious prayers—and with plenty of money jingling in our pockets"; for we must love this neighbor, the sufferer, "the unjustly treated, the oppressed, cheated, forgotten, or neglected," as we love ourselves. And throughout his book, whether Merton comments on a whole gamut of human interests, writers, the anomalies of the world situation, philosophies, or Adolf Hitler, the love and charity of a true Christian subserves it all.

As the book follows the author's intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage in the two years before his entering the monastery, it falls chronologically and logically into five parts: Perry Street, New York (Winter, 1939-1940); Cuba (Spring, 1940); New York and St. Bonaventure (1940-1941); Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani (Holy Week, 1941); and St. Bonaventure, Harlem, and Our Lady of the Valley (1941).

In the first section his subject matter ranges from comments on his reading—Blake, Dante, James Joyce, Graham, Kierkegaard—recounting of the reactions of would-be-art connoisseurs to the Angelicos, Breughels, and El Grecos exhibited at the World's Fair, analyzing the subtle distinctions between the logics of language and of mathematics, to an observation on the pronouncement of a Hartford Court on the meting out of justice toward some little beavers who had unwittingly disrupted Connecticut traffic in constructing their dam. But what was at the time a soul-searching question to the young Merton, namely, "What is the mild yoke of Christ's service?" accounts for a beautiful disquisition on the gift of charity, actually the gospel story of the Magdalen ministering to Christ, which parallels quite accurately a rather long, unpublished poem of Merton's written about that time and still in manuscript, namely, "The Ointment."

The selections from the Cuban diary flash with color and contour of landscape and seascape in and about Havana, and whether he is narrating the details of a search for a copy of St. John of the Cross in the multifarious and picturesque bookstores of that city, defending the intense realism of Spanish religious art, or attending a performance of Beatriz Nolesco's vaudeville troupe on the stage of *Teatro Principal* in Camaguey, he keeps the reader on an intellectual alert.

Part III, which is the largest selection of entries, shows us Merton as scholar, and as professor at St. Bonaventure's University, as he comments variously and fascinatingly, if tersely and tartly at times, on his readings and his teachings. But through it all he is a man with a "single eye," measuring passing events—the ethics of war, Marxism, segregation—solely by the norms of charity. There is also a splendid analysis of Kierkegaard's metaphysics of the "Dark Night of the Soul," and in one brief entry we find allusion to Chaucer's Introduction to "Sir Thopas," St. Bernard, Cocteau, Hieronymus Bosch, James Joyce, and Dylan

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Thomas' *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog*, which he refrained from purchasing, since he feared "the title would be the only good thing about it." And he tells of reading Blake to his evening classes—Blake whom "I have been reading all these years without comprehension." There is a sparkling humor too, in the three question and answer dialogues with himself, one dealing with his current novel, *The Labyrinth*, which he says was rejected by Macmillan a year earlier, adding that "since then it has been to Viking, Knopf, Harcourt Brace, then to the agent Curtis Brown, who sent it to Modern Age, Atlantic Monthly Books, McBride, and now Garrick and Evans, whose 'No' has not yet reached me. . . . So many bad books get printed, why can't my bad book get printed?" There is an entry dated February 9, 1941, on the poems of Dylan Thomas, about whom "there is nothing tinny and chatty," and whose writing "depends on a terrific coherence of sound and imagery overlying an incoherence, or maybe even lack of ideas . . . kind of abstractions, but abstractions full of tremendous, sinewy craft and wit and inventiveness and vividness."

Of part IV, the interlude at the abbey, and the briefest, yet perhaps most intense portion of the book, he suggests that he "tear out all the other pages of this book, and all the other pages of anything else I have ever written and begin here." For these pages contain his notes taken during this retreat at Gethsemani, notes filled with vision of essential truth, and an almost clairvoyant foreshadowing of his future entrance there. When the retreat was over he left the monastery to go "for no good reason, to New York . . . desiring only one thing: to love God . . . to follow His will." He concludes: "Could it ever possibly mean that I might some day become a monk in this monastery?"

In the final portion of Merton's *Journal*—St. Bonaventure, Harlem, Our Lady of the Valley—we hear of his crucial meeting with the Baroness de Hueck at the College, his helping the workers in Harlem, and a poignant description of a play which he witnessed there, staged by the little negro children with a "sort of sophistication you get in some medieval mystery play . . . condemning by their own complete innocence and ignorance the stupidities they were talking about, all the injustice that had fallen upon them and their parents' parents, for generations." But most important for his future life was his conversation with the Baroness on his ride back from Buffalo where he had gone with two of the Franciscan friars to meet her. There are her searching questions, which he feared—whether to join her at Friendship House in Harlem, to which he was strongly attracted, and where he could continue his writing, or "renounce everything" and enter the Trappists . . . yet with this significant afterthought—"If God wants me to write, I can write anywhere!" Apropos of the alternatives he closes his *Journal* with the statement, "I will ask one of the friars."

This book is tremendously important and necessary not only for its intrinsic excellences in discovering and reviewing the basic terrain of the young Merton's developing mind, but for the sheer delight of the contrapuntal quality of knowledge it offers to set beneath and against the primary facts of what we now know of the life of the mature monk and writer.

Upon the eight unnumbered pages of *Prometheus, A Meditation*, one of one hundred and fifty copies privately printed at the Margaret I. King Library Press and autographed by the author, is a surely unique meditation, wherein the Promethean myth is contrasted with the reality of the Christian's identity in and with Christ; the Promethean instinct to despair, with the security of the Chris-

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tians' divine sonship in Christ. The Promethean fire, Merton equates with the mythical hero's identity in God, his own freedom. "Not knowing that the fire was his for the asking, a gift of the true, Living God, Prometheus felt obliged to steal what he could not do without."

Finally, Prometheus is contrasted with Christ. "No one was ever less like Prometheus on Causasus, than Christ on His Cross; He came down from heaven with the fire Prometheus needed, hidden in His Heart." There is explicit practical application too, in excusing our desire and longing "to see good days"; after all, God told us to seek them. There is nothing we can steal from God, since "before we can think of stealing it, it has already been given." This is a very special book, with a very special and original meditation applicable to every living man.

This book should be available to the general public, even if only in paperback.

In the same category as Merton's *Prometheus* meditation is the handsome Christmas gift book, *Nativity Kerygma*, in a 16/6 artistic format, Times Roman type, designed by Stanley Morison, with art work and layout by Frank Kacmarcik, and printed by letterpress on Mohawk white Vellum. In celebrating the mysteries of Christ as their feasts recur, the Church first announces and proclaims them as a herald proclaims the triumphal entrance of a victorious King into a city: "Christ is born!" "Christ is risen!" The heralds to whom this proclamation is entrusted are her apostles and her preachers. Christianity is thus essentially kerygmatic, with the priest a herald, *kerux*, crying out in the desert to make straight the ways of Christ.

These twelve pages are such a proclamation, a *kerygma* of Christ's nativity, clustered about texts of the liturgy of the feast in the manner of a careful articulation of its message and relation to the life of every Christian. We are born this day with Christ; by faith we receive the light of Christ in order to manifest it by our witness and by the works of our charity towards one another, which two things are united together in the greatest of all our acts of worship in which we celebrate together the divine mysteries. "Such a message, *Evangeli-um*," says Merton, "coming from God rather than from men, should be uttered with all solemnity, printed with seriousness and splendor. It is not fitting that pages like these should be bought or sold, and therefore, they are not offered for sale, they can only be given as a present. They have no price and neither has salvation."

Still, each library should somehow be able to secure a copy of this beautiful book.

Monastic Peace is a remarkable little treatise, not only as regards to content, but artwork and layout as well. It contains exquisite drawings by Frank Kacmarcik, and ten photographs by Shirley Burden. This book is not, as its title might lead one to suppose, written primarily for monks, or for such as contemplate entering a monastery—at least that is the opinion of this reviewer. Under five chapter headings: "Blessed are the Peacemakers," "Action and Contemplation," "The School of Charity," "The Vision of Peace," and "I have Chosen You," it presents a concentrated analysis of the total and essential Christian life such as one rarely comes upon in a work of such small dimension. And though the *peace* which constitutes the motif of the book is situated in monastic pattern, the basic doctrine is applicable to every man, for "the monk is just an ordinary Christian who lives, in the monastery, the ordinary Christian life: but he lives

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it in all its perfection. He puts aside everything else, he forgets every other concern in order to *be a Christian*."

There are luminous expositions of precisely what it means to *be a Christian*, definitions of grace and charity, and warnings given, lest, diverted by the language of certain spiritual writers, we tend to take a too materialistic view of it and "come to imagine that grace is some kind of 'thing' or commodity, like oxygen or gasoline . . . that fills up a tank in our soul and keeps us going like supernatural fuel," and even go so far as to "imagine the possibility of measuring the 'amount' of this precious commodity we have stored up." But it is folly so to think of grace, for when God gives Himself initially, He gives Himself totally, and in that sense does not become "more present" later on. "Growth in grace is one of our own supernatural participation in His presence and life within us."

There is also splendid and recurrent emphasis on the Liturgy as the Church's great school of prayer; it is not a mere matter of art, chant, and symbolism, "but Christ Himself, who, by His Holy Spirit, prays and offers sacrifice in His Body, the Church." Also, Merton carefully articulates the *life of prayer*: it is not one of intense, analytical thought; it is more than thought, and, needless to say, "it is also something more than words and formulas." A reporter of a southern newspaper is quoted as saying when writing of the foundation of a Cistercian monastery in the Bible Belt of the United States: "The Trappists rise at two a.m. and from then until six they *say their prayers*," which statement, though true in a sense, nevertheless betrayed a complete incomprehension of what prayer really means. The monk (and the Christian) must live in an "atmosphere of prayer," which far from implying a "nothing but" attitude (the negative approach), takes in man's whole being and all his existence. It engages the whole man. The correct concepts of sacrifice, the mystique of the vows, solitude, and the acceptance of one's own indigence while at the same time rising above oneself to "burst out of our own limits, and stretch out to attain something of the stature of Christ," are all beautifully explicated.

In the fourth chapter, in elucidating the Vision of Peace, there is an analysis of Marxism. "Marx after all was a genius," Merton says, "and the impact of his thought upon the world has been too tremendous to be ignored." But if Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, appealed to the verdict of history to reveal the precise value and import of their doctrine, history has not disappointed anyone's expectations in this matter. The monk too is immersed in history, and forms just as much a part of it as the communist. "His role in history, though more hidden, is just as decisive," and he closes the chapter with a lengthy quotation from Dostoyevski, in which the saintly monk, Staretz Zossima, sums up Christian perfection.

A final chapter is specific as to the authentic meaning of vocation, and a Benedictine vocation in particular. Incidentally, among the natural qualities on which grace must build the structure of supernatural sanctity, Merton lists "plenty of common sense, as well as a sense of humor, and a normal sympathy and toleration of the weaknesses of other human beings." The mere desire to pray for a vocation may be a sign that God has already decreed a favorable answer to your prayer.

This book is one to be widely circulated (five thousand copies have been printed and are obtainable at Gethsemani Abbey). It is truly a book of basic meditation and reflection for every man who takes his vocation as a Christian seriously.

Sister M. Thérèse, S.D.S.

Book Reviews:

Jesuit in Space

A Case of Conscience. By James Blish. Ballantine. \$2.00.

NOT SINCE the *Perelandra* trilogy has a science-fantastist succeeded in combining casuistry with cosmophysics. Though Blish is ungifted in the arts of plotting and characterization, he partially compensates by the knowledgeable air with which he develops his setting and by his audacity in sending a Jesuit fifty light-years from Earth in the Holy Year 2050.

Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, S.J., Peruvian priest-biologist, finds Lithia a second paradise. Its only drawback is the perfect society its lizards have formed entirely by unaided reason. Suspecting a devil-created trap to seduce men from grace, Ramon closes *Finnegans Wake* and falls into the Manichean heresy by attributing creativity to Satan.

While Pope Hadrian VIII knocks sense into Ramon at Rome, a Lithian egg hatches into Egtverchi, who becomes a news commentator so popular that he stirs Earth-wide rebellion. Through an agent of the Adversary, Egtverchi works for ultimate good, since his destructiveness forces humanity out of its stifling underground tunnels. In shame at the "Snake's" intransigence, his brother Lithians saw down their priceless Message Tree.

Therefore they cannot be warned that Egtverchi plans to turn Lithia into a fortress or that a mistake in the thinking of Dr. Cleaver, an agnostic physicist, is about to explode that world. Following Pope Hadrian's orders, Ramon streaks toward Lithia with Dr. H. O. Petard, who hopes to dissuade Cleaver from his experiment. But Ramon knows that both Cleaver and Egtverchi, instruments of the Great Nothing, have prepared their own destruction. As Lithia looms brightly into view, Ramon obeys his Pope's command and tremblingly *exorcises* the planet.

The explosive finish shows that all prayers are answered and that God may use temporal science as a means of answering them. Catholic readers who have hung on this far will be pleased to find Blish's reasoning—if not profound—at least elementarily sound.

University of Wisconsin

Richard Coanda

Ebb and Eclipse

The Post-Symbolist Period. By Kenneth Cornell. Yale University Press. \$4.00.

THE SUBTITLE of Kenneth Cornell's book, *French Poetic Currents 1900-1920*, immediately launches the reader on an attempt to anticipate the ground it will cover. What happened in French poetry during those twenty years which, roughly speaking, extend from Mallarmé's death to the explosion of Dadaism? The distance between these limits leads one to assume that much *must* have happened. Yet, significantly enough, few names and few titles stand out in the average memory: Claudel, Francis Jammes, Régnier, Apollinaire, the early verse

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of Saint-John Perse and Jules Romains, perhaps Valéry Larbaud, and *La Jeune Parque* towards the very end. These are by no means unimportant landmarks. Still, one would expect that, from a period relatively close to ours, time would not have washed away so much and left so little. Was it then that poetry suffered something of an eclipse during those years? Had it been exhausted by the demands pressed upon it by the great adventurers usually joined under the dubious banner of Symbolism? The fact that one can speak of a Post-Symbolist Period would tend to indicate the possibility of an affirmative answer. For the writers whom Cornell examines, no task is more urgent than to evaluate, test and question year after year the achievement of the preceding generation. The last futile drops are extracted from fruit that long ago had yielded all its substance. True, new paths are being gingerly explored, but the old ones still exert their fascination. Apollinaire is here the representative figure, torn between the conflicting calls of order and adventure, the conflicting attitudes of impertinence and respect, carried along by every new current, whirled about by every new eddy, hanging briefly on to every slippery stone that emerges from the stream. It is not by coincidence, surely, that the strongest, most durable verse of the age is written in those years by outsiders: a consul in China, a young man who remembers his West Indian childhood, or an older one who has turned his back on poetry for many years—none of whom were very interested in the seething literary guerillas which Cornell has undertaken to trace in his new book.

This is an admirably painstaking and scholarly work, whose main value, I feel, is to remind us how niggardly and restricted in available space is that Pantheon of writers which we call literary history. How many efforts, how many voices would be irretrievably lost, were it not for the sober attention granted to them by scrupulous literary archaeologists like Cornell. Over such studies as these hovers a Villonesque refrain: where are the poets of yesteryear? Their manifestos, their magazines, their squabbles are apparently vain. In point of fact, one wonders whether this tumultuous vortex does not create a vacuum which is eventually filled by the really perennial writers. Soldiers know that marking time makes it easier than being halted to start marching forward again. This is the very function of the sort of literary activity to which Cornell devotes his attention.

He does not raise questions of value. He has appointed himself a task from which he does not like to swerve: to examine chronologically the various aspects of poetical production and discussion manifested over a span of twenty years. The ultimate impression one draws from his chapters may be one of sheer confusion: he is only being faithful to reality. Overall trends are too often simplifications of minute but dynamic distinctions to which the later historian is likely to be insensitive. One is also valuably reminded that sound and fury are not necessarily associated with idiocy. Many of the fleeting figures which pop up and vanish from Cornell's pages were intelligent and dedicated men, as concerned with their art as with scoring a point in their particular feuds. Until now, the student of the period had no detailed itinerary he could follow. He will now know the lay of the land which he must explore by himself, if he wants to form an opinion about the intrinsic merits of so much that has been buried and forgotten. On this last point, he cannot expect much help from *The Post-Symbolist Period*, though he may be tantalized by the quotations which Cornell grudgingly inserts. But let him set out without fear: he has a first-rate

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map, and the satisfaction of knowing that any pictures he brings back will be wholly his own.

Bryn Mawr College

Mario Maurin

Love and Marriage

Liebe und Ehe in der modernen Literatur. By Hubert Becher, S.J. Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht-Carolusdruckerei.

WE ARE TOLD that pre-marital and marital relations have fallen into utter turmoil in the world of today, and that contemporary writers have done little or nothing to clarify the problems at hand. Becher believes that a more Christian approach to literature would bring order into this chaos. He strongly disapproves of the non-Christian concept of love and marriage, which was begun in German literature by Gottfried von Strassburg, continued by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and intensified by Sigmund Freud's theories of the subconscious.

This non-Christian genre places its main emphasis upon the complete satisfaction of the lover's egotistical desires. Here the egocentric person loves only his own image as reflected in the desires of his beloved. Becher wants to change this individualistic emphasis to a Christian view of life and love. He sides with a number of Christian writers, among them Gertrud von le Fort and Paul Claudel, who in their works have subjugated the concept of love to a greater good, namely such considerations as need, family, and society, the highest good being the selfless love of God.

The basis of Christian marriage is the selfless love of one's spouse. Becher believes that contemporary autonomous individualism has brought about a state where marriage partners can give each other everything—except themselves. Becher agrees with Robert Musil when the latter states that "love is an ecstasy, a stepping-out of one's own frame" (*Ausser-sich-sein*). If man is capable of selfless love to God, then he is also capable of selfless love to his fellow man. Stanislaus D'Oremont, Luise Rinsers and others reflect the highest form of love in their depiction of monastic life where the concentration is mainly on the selfless spiritual form of love.

Becher's ethical approach to love and marriage in literature is most commendable, yet it is doubtful that contemporary writers, particularly a certain set of popular writers in France, Sweden, Norway, and Germany will change their emphasis in matters of love from the carnal to the spiritual. This booklet is by no means exhaustive, nor was it intended to be. It is rather in the form of a survey. It will make interesting reading for the Christian as well as the non-Christian public.

Marquette University

John Michalski

Another Eliot Party

T. S. Eliot: A Symposium For His Seventieth Birthday. Edited with an introduction by Neville Braybrooke. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$5.00.

THIS IS A most uneven kind of volume from the very nature of its aim. For it is as if the editor had arranged a birthday party for Mr. Eliot, inviting old

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friends, and some quite young admirers. The result is a good deal of chat and a great deal of incidental data, like that of George Hoellering who made the film of *Murder in the Cathedral*. He mentions that his difficulties with the Knights' apologies elicited from Mr. Eliot the comment that this scene was his main reason for writing the play.

Hugh Dinwiddy on "Reading T. S. Eliot with Schoolboys" writes: "Indeed, so sensitive and precise and final and strong are the essays that the schoolboy mind cannot meet them with rational argument, for the poet seems to have anticipated all possible lines of criticism." A remark like that tells a great deal about our educational patterns and about how to develop the inability to read poetry and criticism. Mr. Dinwiddy assumes that a writer has a point of view. Therefore, another writer confronting him is bound to have a slightly different point of view. But Mr. Eliot, working not out of a visual but an auditory order of knowledge, has no point-of-view. He accepts a multiplicity of relations simultaneously, as they occur in an analogical structure. It is not then necessary to draw any conclusions or to establish any outlook, but only to provide a listening attitude. The reader of Eliot's verse or prose soon becomes "aware that he is listening to a voice, like music, speaking out of silence."

For me the most rewarding essay in this volume is Elizabeth Sewell's on "Lewis Carroll and T. S. Eliot: Nonsense Poets." She opens by alluding to Chesterton's 1904 notion that "Nonsense was the literature of the future." Then she points out that "Carroll is *lusus naturae* but a central figure, as important for England, and in the same way, as Mallarmé is for France. Nonsense is how the English choose to take their Pure Poetry, their *langue mathématique* or *romance sans paroles*: their struggle to convert language into symbolic logic or music." Perhaps, if all languages begin as codes and only become languages as they permeate all aspects of our experience, so languages can revert to code again when the social matrix cracks.

Denis ApIvor on "Setting the *Hollow Men* to Music" has some very shrewd remarks: "In fact, a key to the musical setting of the poem could be found in the combination of vulgar secular (jazz) rhythms with the solemnity of liturgical chant, and this is the way which I approached the problem of setting such verse which is already half-way to music." The Ambrosian hymns were inspired adaptations of the top sixty of their day. In our time Laforque, Eliot, and others have shown us how to inter-relate the common and the decorous in order to release unexpected splendor.

Let us reflect that as ours is by all odds the greatest age in science, and that no great age of science ever lacked parity of artistic performance, we do live among some of the greatest poets and artists of all ages.

University of Toronto

H. Marshall McLuhan

The Quiet Experience

Moment in Ostia. By Sister M. Thérèse. Hanover House. \$3.00.

WHEN I finished reading Sister M. Thérèse's third collection of poetry, *Moment in Ostia*, I found myself asking why she is not more frequently anthologized and discussed by the critics. Certainly, at the very least, here was a book with a higher uniform level of excellence than most of the slender

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volumes that cross my desk. There was not a single example of shoddy workmanship in the collection. Yet by tacit agreement the author seems to be consigned to some kind of poetic ghetto; she is labeled a "religious poet" and therefore put into a different literary pigeonhole.

Such a train of thought in one sympathetic to Sister Thérèse's poetry would lead to the feeling that the secular public is out to persecute those who sing the glories of God. Actually, however, I think such suspicions are unnecessary. The explanation is simpler. The average reader has such rudimentary knowledge of Christian dogma and experience that he can respond only to the grossest or most sensational stimuli. A Thomas Merton or Robert Lowell, by sheer violence and dramatization of sin and damnation, can shock the reader into attention. But Sister M. Thérèse is quiet and gentle, and the light that shines from her pages is not so much the fires of damnation as the pervasive light of creation and salvation. She is not strident enough to stir those readers whose religious perceptions are vestigial or embryonic. On the other hand, it's no good to attempt a reading of her verse without regard to the One whom she directly or indirectly hymns. Aesthetic response requires here a response also to what she is writing about. Thus it seems likely, until there is a larger reading public of poetically literate Christians, that Sister Thérèse's work will be the joy of the few when it could mean so much to so many.

In the book as a whole, many of the poems grow out of quiet experience. The author has the ability to see an accurate analogy or image in the most seemingly trifling moments. In "A Question of Theology," for instance, she uses the hospitable antics of a Weimaraner and a Labrador dog as a parable:

A Weimaraner and black Labrador
Anticipant, leap to the door,
Retrieving us from the night,
Then with a light
Gesture of informality
Take over all the subtle points
Of hospitality
And constitute themselves
Hosts for the evening.

Thus the poem begins, and moves without forced connections to its end:

Meanwhile I shall content myself with this
Simpler hypothesis:
Might they not see
Clairvoyantly
The day of the last hunt when their good master
After a lifetime of seeking shall bag his quarry
And rapturously gather God
From the last thickets of this darkling world—
Then like a rocket hurled
They shall streak past him to the gate of stars
To shout his coming at that joyous place;
Even as Scripture tells the delightful story
How one of their ancestral kin

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Troubled the heels of an angel long ago
On the perilous journey to Rages and return,
And though
In deference to heaven's wish the angel led—
On the last stretch of hillside nearing home
Tobias' little dog ran on ahead.

Very often the author can see an apparently trivial incident *sub specie aeternitatis*, and create a poem as probing as "For One Who Spoke Lightly of Death," with its conclusion:

My heart shall merely counsel and say go,
Anima naturaliter Christiana,
Blithely in the innocence of your singing
Along the worn paths of the academe;
Loiter with Plato and with Aristotle
Whose texts you feed on;
Love your immutable sea;
Till some quick morning off your starboard bow
Truth will come walking toward you on the water
Striking a flame from every crest;
And you will steer for shore, no more the searcher,
Or voyager, but the pursued, the taken;
A new Ulysses you will hurry back
To tell us of the wonder—
Dazzle our minds with startling narrative
Of some new star you gazed on brighter than Vega,
Of feet you heard walking the wild night sea.

Moment in Ostia is a book by an author to whom God is quietly and surely present in the smallest things and moments. His presence is a source of delight but not of surprise. It is a gently radiant book. At the same time, it has the limitations of its virtues. There is little change of mood. There is no barbaric yawp or metaphysical agony. There is a lack of poetic roughage. The mood and versification tend toward excessive smoothness, and sometimes monotony lurks close at hand. Frequently I thought I had come to the end of a poem, and turned the page to discover my mistake. Lack of change of pace, lack of crudity and violence—this is what most obviously separates these poems from the poetry that lingers and haunts most persistently. But if one put aside thought of ultimate greatness, many of these finely grained and serenely joyous poems seem here to stay as long as men give thanks to God and love the enchantment of language.

Beloit College

Chad Walsh

Husband, j.g.

Tell Me Stranger. By Charles Bracelen Flood. Houghton, Mifflin. \$3.50.

THE PROBLEM of this novel is that Frank Lakeland, a Catholic, wants to marry Sarah Benton, a divorced woman. She wants to blame the Church for the anguish which he feels in breaking God's sacrament: "I just want to

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know what kind of a good, loving God it is who wouldn't give me a second chance, that's all! . . . I made a mistake in my first marriage! No girl ever went up to the altar with better intentions. My bad luck was that I married a bastard who walked out on me."

"Well, that's too bad," Frank answers, "but I'm not going to say my church is wrong just because I've decided to disobey the rules."

"Go to hell," says Sarah.

"Maybe I will," answers Frank.

The bulk of the book adds up to this point, an extremely important one, which is worth any novelist's and reader's time in a period when marriage no longer seems to carry the necessary sense of a lasting commitment. The end of the book provides the solution. Sarah gives up Frank, forces him to return to his Wall Street job, and flees to Edward Crane, a sculptor friend who (the book suggests) will eventually heal her broken heart with his love. Crane also, and rather succinctly, tells Sarah and the reader what she has done: ". . . something very Christian for the boy. You denied yourself something you wanted. You kept a faith you didn't even believe in for someone who wasn't strong enough to keep it for himself. You sacrificed for the good of a friend. That's Christianity. You can understand Christ if you want to."

"No bid," is Sarah's last remark.

Without insisting that a reader should respond as Sarah did, we can say that a reader's belief in the story and the solution depends on his belief in the characters. Outside of a few interior moments and significant conversations such as those noted above, Sarah and Frank reveal themselves through action which keeps the book moving at a lively pace. The only trouble is that they reveal themselves in such a way that at the end a reader may feel that Sarah is well out of her marriage with Frank for quite other reasons than those described by sculptor Crane. We may be inclined to see Frank as Sarah saw him for a moment in her mind's eye when she was trying to imagine him back in her New York apartment and not mixed up with the sun and sea, wine and love making on a beach in Portugal. For a moment she imagines Frank ". . . like a boy compared to the rest of the men, the balding paunchy men." And she sees the apartment which she has filled with souvenirs of her glamorous globe-trotting life stripped to fit Frank's taste. She begins to count their age difference: "I'll be thirty-six when he is thirty. I'll be. . ."

What Flood has in his novel is a reversal of roles—this may be a sign of our times. Sarah plays the lead. She is aggressive, ambitious, artistic, successful and, of course, beautiful. Frank fades before her brilliance. Even when Frank climbs a mountain, kills a man, and makes masterful love to Sarah, he can't overcome the image in our minds of a junior assistant to Sarah.

This reversal of roles, this love from which Sarah is furiously running and to which Frank is drawn, half in anger, and against his religious scruples, should provoke a reader to even deeper exploration. But the novel never quite comes to this. Frank flunkies for Sarah around the western world, carrying her cameras while she ignores danger to take her pictures. His desire grows with his irritation and anger at her for not treating him "like a human," as he says; what he means is that he wants to make love to her, but she won't let him, and is stronger than he is. The love, when it catches them, turns out to be a brief burst of passion in bed.

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Flood tells a fast story following this pair as they dash from Paris to Rome to Kilimanjaro to Algeria to Portugal, but his telling owes more to Hemingway than a ritual trip up Kilimanjaro. He makes extensive use of the emotional shorthand, the terse speech which seems to mean more than it says. The following is Scene II, Chapter Sixteen, in its entirety:

"What are you thinking about?"

"Trees."

"Trees?" The question low in the room, the sound of late steps on the cobblestone alley below, a reflection of streetlight on the ceiling. There was salt in the air.

"Trees. And snow. And then the waves. And maybe a stream somewhere."

"Anything else?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"You know what."

While we're pretty sure we know what Frank is thinking about (even without the trees), we might be thinking that some of these scenes are pretty skimpy and that there is a powerful lot of them in this short book. Mr. Flood has obtained economy, surely enough, and speed, and even that Madison Avenue objective, eye-appeal. But sometimes we may feel that we are at the mercy of a bored six-year-old who is TV channel-hopping. Just when things are getting good—sometimes even before that point—click, and we're off to someplace else. Too many times we're off to watch Frank's Uncle Arthur, head of the Wall Street firm for which Frank worked. Many of the spaces which author Flood carved out by his diligent chopping of the story into so many scenes he stuffs with the sub-plot concerning Uncle Arthur and a big stock deal which comes out all right because Nephew Frank made a thorough analysis of the firms involved. This business seems disconcerting on the same level as the soap opera which leaves us hanging at a crucial moment only to turn aside, "Meanwhile, back at home. . . ."

In addition to this weakness there is the banality of some watered-down, speeded-up comment on the treatment of Africans by foreigners.

As a final comment, it might be interesting to let an imaginary reader speak a word to his author: "You're right, Mr. Flood; everything did work out for the best. Frank had his fling, but he won't go to Hell—he's back safe and sound with Uncle Arthur. And Sarah—LOVE caught up with her; now she'll make a good wife for Edward Crane. For a while I didn't think she'd get out of that affair with Frank so easily—not even pregnant—and to think she was actually a kind of Christian martyr! Thank you, Mr. Flood, for an entertaining few hours. Your novel was, as the dust jacket says, a 'spirited story' with a 'surprising climax!'"

Montana State University

Douglas Bankson

Spare and Neat

Testament and Other Poems. By John Fandel. Sheed and Ward. 95¢.

ALTHOUGH readers of literary magazines have become accustomed to associating the name of John Fandel with some of the best poetry written by

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the younger poets of the last decade and a half—he has also published two poetry brochures, *The Season's Differences* (1948), and *The World I Make* (1958)—this is his first collection in book form, and that in a format that is small and attractive and has all the advantages of a paper-back. Though there are only forty-three poems in the collection, they are poems of a superb quality: Part I, (27 poems on various subject-matters); Part II, "Testament," (six poems); Part III, "Six Poems to Silence"; Part IV, "Observations at Aquidneck," (three poems); and Part V, "Propositions South of Montaup Mountain," (two poems).

The reading of the poems in this small collection is an experience in several dimensions of texture: a brilliant integration of the aesthetic, philosophic, and theological disciplines. Though the poetic structure is concentrated, spare, and restrained, its diction only seems simple, for the young poet has weighted his metaphors with layers of meaning from the fount of authentic experience. For all his youth—he has just turned thirty-four—Fandel has achieved a maturity of intellect and spirit and touched on borders of a spiritual reality which few can ever hope to come near.

Though it is difficult to encompass the character and general quality of these poems in one statement, one might remark that, with the exception of two or three sharply objective, almost imagistic pieces, such as "Melinda," "Game," and "Nuns in the Windy Morning," Fandel is, in a sense, a nature poet, but with a difference; for it is with no monistic self-identification with nature that he is exercised; rather nature is for him a symbol of the tension between the natural and the supernatural orders, an objective externalization of an inner personal world of truth, love, and beauty. In a word, nature is Fandel's basic frame of reference for his personalized response, which is in all instances theologically valid. Whether he has things to say about "The ordered quietudes of death," "the gaunt hawk bent with wind," "the adventure of the root within the aster," or of the "... folding of eyes/A reason put away./Each of us dreams to rise./I sleep for the waking day," the reader is in his debt for a pattern of piercingly accurate spiritual values, of which these images are but a working symbol.

While a particular type of reflective reader might use the poems in one or another of the later sections of the book, such as "Testament," or "Propositions South of Montaup Mountain," for his own personal soul-searching and meditation, for the ordinary reader, perhaps the poems that will remain impressed on his mind longest are such as "This Side of Asia," "Walking in Switzerland," or a piece as vibrantly splendid as "About My Students," in which the students stand

Against the pleated pillars of Old Main,
Like caryatids in plaids, the coeds lean,
Loafing in wisdom's porticoes between
Lectures on Aristotle and the Dane. . .

"Six Songs to Silence" contains poems on the themes of love and friendship. "Testament," another group of six poems, which not only because of its title, but also because of its content, this reviewer suspects comprises the heart of this little book, is wonderfully rewarding. Here is bright confrontation with nature's reality: birds, blossoms, the air, a flower, a grain of sand, a shadow on the water, or the "sundown sheen" with a "tempered room" where "Against

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the rainbow screen/The strange night creatures bloom." Though one might detect in an occasional line an echo of Hopkins or of Eliot, what matter? Any poet, no matter how original, will unconsciously—shall we say "subconsciously"—articulate something of the matrix of poetic associations within him, gleaned from his best readings. Fandel's is a new, fresh talent, and a decidedly significant one.

In sum, one might say that there is a metaphysical cleanness and detachment, even austerity, about these poems, that one rarely comes upon in most books of modern poetry. In these sensitively turned pieces are hints and parables of that personalist universe in which, in his own encounters with nature, the poet has seen images of the freedom and creativity of the human person. In a word, John Fandel is a man who can, one feels, in both worlds of poetry and of living, answer for himself. He has found his proper stance on the "mountains taller than Mount Everest." And his technically accomplished poems cannot fail to leaven with their profundity and truth the poetry of the decades in which we live.

Sister M. Thérèse, S.D.S.

The Shock of Simplicity

Four Stories. By Sigrid Undset. Knopf. \$3.75.

IN A WAY, Sigrid Undset is a shocking writer. She is shocking by the fact of her simplicity. Her style is the clear, uncluttered style of the sensitive reporter; her characters have the refreshing qualities of real people, the so-called "little people" whose "humble-ness" gives them stature this world does not understand. Miss Undset's insights into her characters is the deep, total look of a loving author. Everything about "Four Stories" is, in the light of today's complicated, paranoid literary world, eye-opening, soul-cleansing, and thoroughly Christian. The Christ-soaked world of Sigrid Undset will be an upsetting one to most readers. For who does not expect to find their literature abuzz in a twisted sin-neurosis whirl? Where, in our modern complexus, is there an oasis without the tortured and the torturer? Sigrid Undset's world is the sweet-sad world bathed in Christ-tears. It is, amazingly enough, the real world as perceived by healthy eyes.

"Selma Broter," the first of Miss Undset's quartet, tells the pathetic story of a spinster whose life is spent in sacrificing for others, but who has little life of her own. Her life is only a glimpse into the full, happy lives of others; her happiness is that of the onlooker. It is a shared peek, a fearful touch, a glance. Yet it is life for her. It is as much as she is able to take and, peacefully, Selma Broter accepts this small share. The point is her unbiting acceptance of a tiny portion of life. Here is Miss Undset's shock-value. Here lies her uniqueness.

"Thojodolf" is the major work of the four. More complex, with a larger canvas to paint on, Miss Undset portrays the intertwining lives of Helene, a childless woman, her sailor husband Julius, Thojodolf, their adopted son, and Thojodolf's irresponsible mother, Fanny Erdahl. As the narrative proceeds it becomes clear that Helene is a woman who cannot relate to people or to life situations. She finds success only in her work. Her relationships with other adults ultimately lead to failure. Her tragedy lies in her inability to have a close relationship with her husband. The default of Julius in favor of the easy

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Fanny Erdahl is Helene's failure, a failure she can neither understand nor reconcile.

The theme of betrayal is continued in "Miss Smith-Tellefsen" who, in the words of Mr. Biorn, the man for whom she is housekeeper, is "a respectable person . . . much too good." Miss Smith-Tellefsen, although she is plain and unattractive, harbors the guarded desire of the unpopular woman. Biorn, unmaliciously, stumbles on this desire and, loving her quickly, leaves her to marry someone else more fitting for his life. Miss Smith-Tellefsen is left with a pathetic memory, the memory of a man's essential pity, rather than his love.

"Simonsen," the fourth of the quartet, is the wistful story of an old man who cannot succeed at any endeavor. Every effort turns to failure; his job failures frustrate him in his personal life, and his unresolved personal life, in turn, influences his work. In his decision to take a small job away from his common-law wife, Olga, and his illegitimate son, Swanhild, Simonsen sadly accepts the failure pattern of his life. As he leaves his country town outside of Christiana in Norway, he thinks pensively to himself: "There must be One Above who decides these things. . . ." Simonsen's only consolation is his faith in God.

Barbara LaRosa

Item on Bibliography

Recusant Books in America, 1559-1640. By Lois Byrns. The Peter Kavanagh Hand-Press. \$35.00.

THIS HANDSOME hand-set, hand-printed little volume, its edition limited to 100 copies, is not only a real collectors' item, but is, moreover, a basic book of first importance to all scholars, librarians and compilers of anthologies in America. The general reader, too, will turn its pages with profit and delight.

Planned as the first fascicle in a series of new accessions, it opens up, especially for American Catholic scholars, a field for investigation too long neglected—data on books written in English for Catholics during the persecution in England 400 years ago. Proclamations against Catholic books, issued in 1563, necessitated the printing at secret presses within England or the smuggling into England from English presses established on the Continent. Some survivals of these many hazards are now in American libraries. These controversial, doctrinal, biographical, devotional, and didactic works constitute a whole body of writing not even referred to in histories and anthologies of English literature. By a first listing of over 500 of these books and their library locations in the United States and Canada, the author has given invaluable aid and impetus to this needed research.

Appropriately, *Recusant Books in America* has been hand-printed in seventeenth century style, on paper of fine quality, at a press not unlike the presses at which the books themselves were printed. It has preserved the original spelling and has been done in Egmont light type-face from Amsterdam, used here for the first time as a book-face.

To Lois Byrns, who has devoted many years to a detailed study of this subject, scholars and book-lovers owe a debt of gratitude; and also to Peter Kavanagh, who, letter by letter and line by line on his home-made hand-press, has produced this unique book.

College of New Rochelle

Mother Grace Monahan, O.S.U.

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